DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

FIRST PUBLISHED AT LONDON,

IN THE YEAR MDCCI.

By ROBERT FLEMING, *V. D. M.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

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7 OCT 04



ROBERTUS FLAMINIUS

DISCOURSES

ON THE FOLLOWING

Important Subjects:

VIZ.

AN ACCOUNT OF
The Rise and Fall of the PAPACY:

THE IMPORT OF

GOD's DWELLING WITH MEN ON EARTH:

THE GREATNESS AND DIFFICULTY OF

THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE AND WORK:

AND

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF RELIGION,
AS IT CENTERS IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

By ROBERT FLEMING, V.D.M.

Ἀληθεύοντες ει Ἀγάπη, Ἀυξησωμεν εἰς ἀυτον τὰ πάντα, ος ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλη, ὁ Χριστός. Eph. iv. 15.

FALKIRK:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY PATRICK MAIR.

M.DCC.XCIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM
LEMON

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN LORD CARMICHAEL,

Principal Secretary of State for the Kingdom of SCOTLAND, One of His MAJESTY's moſt Honourable Privy Council, and Chancellor of the College of GLASGOW.

MY LORD,

THE honour I have in being related to your Lordſhip, and the happineſs I enjoy in being acquainted with you, do not only encourage me to prefix your Lordſhip's name to the following Diſcourſes, but allow me alſo to believe you will not take it amiſs that I do ſo.

And ſince you have ſo lately laid me under new ties to your Lordſhip, in deſigning my promotion to ſo conſiderable an office, as that of principal of the college of Glaſgow; I find myſelf obliged to lay hold on this firſt opportunity of declaring to the world the grateful ſenſe I have of ſo great and undeſerved a favour; and the rather, becauſe my circumſtances have not allowed me the ſatisfaction of complying with ſo kind and generous an offer.

But ſeeing it is to my own loſs and diſadvantage only, that I have declined ſo very honourable and beneficial a place, and that therefore I muſt be ſuppoſed to have acted thus, from conſiderations of another nature: I know your Lordſhip will judge, from the true regard you have to Conſcience yourſelf, that ſome ſtraitning circumſtances of this kind muſt have been (as indeed they were) the only Remora, that prevented my being ſo happy as your Lordſhip deſigned I ſhould; and that therefore you will not be diſpleaſed with me for what was not my fault, but my misfortune.

I am not made for flattery, and I know your Lordſhip is above it: And therefore I ſhall not ſay any thing here by way even of juſt encomium; becauſe as your character is ſo public that it needs it not, ſo your modeſty is ſo great, that I know any attempt of this kind would be unwelcome and uneaſy to you.

I ſhall therefore only tell your Lordſhip, that, as I queſtion not but you have the good wiſhes of all honeſt men that know you: So I reckon myſelf peculiarly obliged to beg of God, that you may long be preſerved, jointly to ſerve God and your prince, the church and your country, with the ſame unſhaken conſtancy, unbiaſſed fidelity, and unſpotted reputation, that you have hitherto been honoured to do.

Which, and that God may bleſs you and your honourable family, with all ſpiritual and temporal mercies here, and with eternal felicity and glory at laſt, is and ſhall be the earneſt and conſtant prayer of,

My LORD,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obliged,

and moſt obedient ſervant,

ROBERT FLEMING.

DEDICATION.

AN

EPISTOLARY DISCOURSE

CONTAINING,

BESIDES OTHER INCIDENTAL MATTERS,

A NEW RESOLUTION AND IMPROVEMENT

BOTH THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL, OF

THE GRAND APOCALYPTICAL QUESTION,

CONCERNING

The Riſe and Fall of Rome Papal.

AN

EPISTOLARY

DISCOURSE,

CONCERNING

The Rise and Fall of the PAPACY, &c.

To all my true and good Friends, every-where; but more particularly to the Worthy Gentlemen and Others that compose the Church to which I am now related as Minister.

My Dear Friends,

IN compliance with the frequent and repeated desires of a great many of you, I suffer the following Discourses to break loose from their fellows, to take their fortune, as we use to say, in the wide world. And, seeing the candor of so many of my friends has made them think they might not be unuseful, I must therefore expect that they will, from the same principle, defend this publication of them, against the censures they may be supposed to fall under both from open enemies and pretended friends. For, though it be a

common and, as it were, threed-bare argument, to plead importunity in this caſe; yet it is ſufficiently known to ſeveral of you, that if it had not been for this, the world had not been troubled with any thing further of this kind from me. For as I am ſure no affectation to be more known or taken notice of, has influenced me to preſent theſe Diſcourſes to public view; ſo I do ſuppoſe it is not unknown to ſome of you, that retirement from this noiſy and vain world has ever been the ſum of my ambition, excepting when public work and ſervice has obliged me to ſhake off the beloved fetters of ſo dear a confinement.

I ſhall not therefore ſay more as to the following Eſſays, than to tell you (what many of you know already) that as the firſt of the Diſcourſes that follow this prefatory one, gave riſe to the publiſhing of the ſecond, ſo the ſecond gave occaſion to the printing of the third. And therefore, ſeeing the late opportunity of preaching, when we entered into our new Meeting-place here in London, Sept. 29. 1700. did induce ſome of you to deſire the publication alſo of that Sermon I preached when I entered upon the paſtoral and miniſterial work among you, June 19. 1698. the ſame occaſion has given birth to the laſt additional Diſcourſe; which ſome remember I made, when I was ſolemnly ſet apart to the Miniſterial Office, Feb. 9. 1687-8. which I have the rather conſented to print now, becauſe it doth not only ſuit with the ſecond Diſcourſe, but becauſe I remember ſeveral falſe or at leaſt imperfect copies were taken of it, when I did at firſt deliver it.

And ſeeing the laſt Diſcourſe (which yet was the firſt, as to time) doth now appear in the view of the world,

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I found myſelf in ſome ſort obliged to intereſt all my friends in this prefatory addreſs: Wherein I do particularly include thoſe of the Engliſh Church of Leyden, and Scots Church in Roterdam, to whom I ſtood related ſucceſſively as Miniſter or Paſtor: whom I do the rather mention here, that I may let them know how much they are ſtill upon my thoughts, though we are ſeparated as to place.

But ſeeing my work is now more particularly appropriated to you, whom I am more immediately concerned with and related unto at preſent, I do therefore, in a more ſpecial manner addreſs myſelf to you at this time. And I hope ye will bear with me, if, from my ſincere reſpect for your welfare, I detain you a while here, before ye enter upon the peruſal either of my apocalyptical thoughts following, or the other Diſcourſes, which I do preſent you with, at your own deſire. For, in caſe either of death, or being otherwiſe rendered incapable to ſerve you, I am willing to give a vent to my thoughts and affection at this time; that whatever comes of me, the following Diſcourſes, together with this, may ſtand as a laſting witneſs of my real concern for your ſouls' welfare.

In the Firſt place therefore, I do declare, that though I am not willing to ſtate my ſufferings upon little matters or modes of worſhip and expreſſion; yet I can ſincerely ſay, that ſhould the divine providence call me to lay down my life for the truths themſelves, which I have preached among you, I hope I ſhould be ſo far from quarrelling with the procedure of God, this way, that I ſhould rejoice in ſuch a martyrdom. And, as I hope I have not contradicted in my life, what I have

preached in the pulpit, whatever my infirmities have been; ſo, I preſume, it will not be looked upon as pride or vanity, if I ſay with the great apoſtle (though, as to the laſt clauſe, I dare not pretend to have been any pattern to you); "Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are venerable, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things. Thoſe things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and ſeen in me, do; and the God of peace ſhall be with you," Phil. iv. 8, 9.

For, in the next place, I thank God, that he, who knows the ſecrets of all hearts, doth teſtify together with my conſcience, that a ſincere concern to be uſeful to our common Chriſtianity, was the thing that did, at firſt, influence me to enter upon this great work of the miniſtry, and hath ever ſince engaged me, though under more diſcouragements than moſt men, to continue in it. So that it is matter of ſweet reflection to me, that I never gave any occaſion to brand our holy profeſſion with the odious name of prieſt-craft, whatever any others have done. For, as I have had no other ambition, than to engage and draw men over to the great and catholic intereſts of Chriſtianity itſelf, in order to their becoming the followers and ſervants of our glorious God and bleſſed Saviour: So I am ſure I can confidently ſay, without any vanity or affectation (for which I dare appeal not only to you, but all others that have known me, ever ſince I began to preach); that there is not one in the world, that ever had juſt occaſion ſo much as to think, that I did at any time attempt to bring any perſon over to my way, as a party. And,

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as thus I have been far from ſeeking either honour, intereſt, or popularity; ſo there are not a few that can bear me witneſs, that I have incurred the cenſures of ſome men of very different denominations, becauſe I could never be induced to think that religion did properly ſtand in the rituals of any of the contending parties.

The differences, therefore, but eſpecially the animoſities, that are among Proteſtant Chriſtians, have ever been grievous and afflictive to me. And to heal theſe, I could chearfully be offered up a ſacrifice, if I can be ſuppoſed to be conſcious of the ſentiments and movements of my own ſoul. For though we of this Congregation differ from all others that diſſent from the Epiſcopal communion, in this, that we are, in a peculiar ſenſe, upon a national foundation, viz. in as far as we not only own the ſame church-government, but keep up the ſame way that the Church of Scotland uſeth, in her public adminiſtrations; to which moſt of us belong as natives, and all of us as proſelytes: Yet I muſt publicly own that, abſtracting from this, I am a diſſenter from that party who ingroſs and monopolize the name of the Church of England. For, though I have ever looked upon other controverſies as more edifying and momentous, than thoſe unhappy ones, that have kept that great body and ours divided: Yet I have ſo far conſidered them, as hitherto to find no reaſon to quit that way I was educated in; notwithſtanding the ſpecious reaſons made uſe of to prejudice people againſt us as ſchiſmatics, rather than to convince us that we are ſo.

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Therefore, in the Third place, I cannot but own (without any deſign to reflect upon them that differ from me in ſuch matters), that I look upon that way as neareſt to the Chriſtian inſtitution, that has the feweſt and moſt natural and unaffected, and, conſequently, moſt ſpiritual rites and ceremonies, in the performance of goſpel-ordinances. For, as a learned * Conformiſt ſays, in a book which he did afterwards indeed ſeem to differ from, but never attempted to retract or refute, and, perhaps, was never able to do: "Certainly the primitive church, that did not charge "men with ſuch a load of articles, as now in theſe "latter ages men are charged with, would much leſs "have burdened men with impoſing doubtful practices "upon them as the ground of church-communion. "There is nothing then that the primitive church "deſerves more imitation in by us, than that admirable "temper, moderation and condeſcenſion which was "uſed in it towards all the members of it. It was "never thought worth the while to make any ſtanding "laws for rites and cuſtoms, that had no other original "but tradition, much leſs to ſuſpend men from her "communion for not obſerving them." And if this was the practice of the primitive church, it was eminently ſo in the apoſtolical age; to whom, as acted by the Holy Ghoſt, it ſeemed good to require nothing, by way of impoſition, but a very few neceſſary things, viz. that Chriſtians ſhould abſtain from idols, blood, things ſtrangled and fornication, Acts xv. 28, 29. But, alas! ſince that time it hath ſeemed good to men (but, I am ſure, not to the Holy Spirit) to impoſe a great many unneceſſary things on the conſciences of others; without any ſuch allowance as was given them, That every

* Stilling. Iren. pag. 122. 68.

every man ſhould be fully perſuaded in his own mind, in what he did, (Rom. xiv. 5.) For what regard have ſome men to this apoſtolical rule, when their impoſitions are laid as ſtumbling-blocks in their brethren's way, (Rom. xiv. 13, &c.) without any regard to the wounding of their weak conſciences, upon the ſuppoſition they are ſo? (1 Cor. viii. 12.) Is this to imitate the apoſtle's tenderneſs, who reſolved rather never to eat fleſh, than to offend any weak brother? (1 Cor. viii. 13.) Or, do men this way ſeek the things of Jeſus Chriſt, or their own private ends and emoluments moſt? Phil. ii. 21.

Therefore let men diſpute about forms and ceremonies, and their decency or neceſſity, as long as they pleaſe; I muſt ſay, with * a reverend conforming miniſter, "That all the art and power of the world cannot "make trifles in the worſhip of God, ſeem matters of "importance to them that reliſh heaven. What trum-"pery are habits, various geſtures and poſtures to "a man that is ſwallowed up in the contemplation of "the infinite majeſty of the glorious God? Or that "is loſt in the ~~ravishing~~ admiration of his goodneſs "and love? Or that is ſunk into the loweſt abaſements "and ſelf-abhorrence for his ſins? Such a ſoul may "be loaded with human inventions, but he can never "look upon them as ornaments or helps to devotion."

Whatever then be the various ideas and theories of what we call edification; yet ſtill, as none can diſpute us out of what we receive moſt advantage from, as to our bodies, ſo neither as to our ſouls. For if no man can be able to perſuade me, that his conſtitution of

* See P. M. in his *Vanity, miſchief and danger of Ceremonies*, propoſed to the *Convocation*, and printed *Anno* 1690.

of body is ſuch a ſtandard to mankind, that I and all others are obliged to reckon that food moſt healthful for us, which the impoſer tells us is ſo to him, though, at the ſame time, we experience it to be noxious or diſagreeable to us: I know no more reaſon, why any man ſhould pretend a power of impoſing modes and forms on my conſcience, which I am diſſatisfied with, from no other reaſon but this, that they appear to be the moſt excellent or decent to him. So that, as liberty is equally neceſſary in the one caſe as in the other, unleſs we value the health of our bodies above the peace of our conſciences and ſecurity of our ſouls: ſo the contrary practice, when force is uſed, can admit of no ſofter term than that of antichriſtian tyranny. I cannot therefore but highly approve of what I find in a * book I have already mentioned: "What poſſible reaſon can "be given, (ſays the author) why ſuch things ſhould not "be ſufficient for communion with a church, which are "ſufficient for ſalvation? And certainly theſe things "are ſufficient for that, which are laid down as the "neceſſary duties of Chriſtianity by our Lord and "Saviour in his word."

I mention theſe things, God is my witneſs, for no private deſign, to uphold a party, or to ſerve the ends of it, as ſuch; but to let thoſe that are prejudiced againſt us know, that we are acted by religion as a principle, and not as a notion only; and that this is the reaſon of our diſſent from thoſe that ſhare the emoluments of the church among them. Otherwiſe it were not probable, that we ſhould unite, in acting contrary to our own intereſt, merely from faction or humour, if we may preſume to know our own ſentiments:

* Stilling. Iren. pref. p. 8.

ments: and I hope moſt, if not all of us, durſt not diſſemble before the great God all our days, in a matter of ſo great importance as this is. So that the diſſenting of ſo many perſons from the eſtabliſhed church, to their own hurt and diſadvantage in the world, may be looked upon as no contemptible argument, by unbiaſſed perſons, that there are ſome men that are acted by religion as a principle, and that take up the miniſtry otherwiſe than as a trade.

But I had this further deſign in touching upon our unhappy differences; that conſidering that they do only concern the externals and circumſtantials of religion, both ye and all others that peruſe theſe lines, and the following Diſcourſes, may be taken off from that fury and bigotry, by which ſo many ſeem to be poſſeſſed at this day, and may learn to mind the great eſſentials of Chriſtianity more, acting conſcientiouſly yourſelves in all things, and judging charitably of thoſe that differ from you, whether they do ſo of you or not. For what I have ſaid on this head, is not in the leaſt deſigned to reflect upon thoſe that differ from us, among whom I acknowledge there are many diſtinguiſhable, not only for parts and learning, but for piety and moderation alſo, upon which accounts I cannot but honour and love them, though they ſhould both deſpiſe and hate me. Nay, I queſtion not, but even many of the bigots for cathedral-worſhip and its annexed hierarchy (who are for running up theſe to as near a conformity to Rome as they can, and yet ſtamp all with a confident pretending to a JUS DIVINUM), may act from conſcience, even in their uncharitableneſs to them that conſcientiouſly differ from them, yea in their hatred of them, and rage againſt them where they have power. But then it muſt

remembred, that as their zeal is not according to knowledge; ſo they are of the ſame tribe with thoſe, of whom our Saviour ſpeaks, when he tells us, that they would perſecute, yea kill his ſervants, when they had opportunity, believing, at the ſame time, that they did God moſt acceptable ſervice. But he immediately adds, "And theſe things will they do, becauſe they have not known the Father, nor me," John xvi. 2, 3. However, my deſign is not to reflect even on them, but rather to pity them, and wiſh them more knowledge, and a better mind.

For as a contentious and eſpecially a perſecuting temper, was never from God, nor according to the rule of the meek and holy Jeſus; whoſe religion is firſt pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be entreated *: So ſuch a diſpoſition was never more unſeaſonable than at this time. For they muſt be unaccountably unobſervant of, and unconcerned with the preſent ſtate and poſture of affairs in Europe, who ſee not in what danger the Proteſtant intereſt is at preſent; conſidering what it has loſt already, and is in hazard of loſing further; together with the ſad decay of true Chriſtian piety, as well as unity, among all ſorts of perſons. I could therefore wiſh we might learn a little prudence, even from our popiſh adverſaries, that we might unite in love, and in deſign to promote a general intereſt, though we attain not to an exact uniformity in all things. For why ſhould not we join as one ſoul againſt that bloody and idolatrous party, when we ſee them do ſo againſt us? though their various ſects and orders, ſuch as Franciſcans and Dominicans, Jeſuits and Janſeniſts, differ as much from one another, both in their opinions and

* James iii. 17, 18.

and in their form and habits (as they are regimented under their ſeveral heads or generals, and as they live according to vaſtly different laws and rules), as we can poſſibly be ſuppoſed to do. But, alas! what moral prognoſtications have we now, but ſuch as ſeem to portend ruin and miſery to us? when we ſee the differences of parties grow up into a ſtated hatred, with a fixed deſign to ruin one another, and conſequently murder the reformed cauſe; which we are obliged not only upon religious accounts to appear for, but even upon civil conſiderations, ſeeing Popery is inconſiſtent with freedom and liberty, than which nothing, in this world, ought to be ſo dear to us. Can we have forgot what barbarities that inhuman party have committed in the world? "For, if we may believe hiſtorians, "(ſays a learned * man,) Pope Julius, in ſeven years, "was the occaſion of the ſlaughter of 200,000 Chriſtians. "The maſſacre in France cut off 100,000 in three "months. P. Perionius avers, that in the perſecution "of the Albigenſes and Waldenſes, 1,000,000 loſt their "lives. From the beginning of the Jeſuits, till 1580, "that is, thirty or forty years, 900,000 periſhed, ſaith "Balduinus. The Duke of Alva, by the hangman, "put 36,000 to death. Vergerius affirms, that the "Inquiſition in 30 years deſtroyed 150,000. To all "this I may add the Iriſh Rebellion, in which 300,000 "were deſtroyed, as the Lord Orery reports in a paper "printed in the reign of Charles II." And how many have been deſtroyed in the late perſecutions in France and Piedmont, in the Palatinate and Hungary, none, I believe, can fully reckon up, beſides thoſe that are or have

* Dr. More in his Divine Dialogues, p. 161. See alſo his Myſtery of Iniquity, lib. 2. chap. 15, 16, &c.

have been in the gallies, and that have fled. This is that idolatrous harlot, ſo glutted with the blood of the ſaints, that a late author, in his Treatiſe of Convocations, ſets up as a pattern to the Church of England; and that another author, in his book, intitled, The Caſe of the Regale and Pontificate (to the ſcandal of the Church of England, for whom they pretend ſuch a zeal), would ſo fain have us united unto, and repreſents, therefore, in ſuch favourable colours. But, I hope, all true Proteſtants will eaſily ſee the ſnake in the graſs. And, ſurely, when we are in hazard of being betrayed within ourſelves, we have ſufficient reaſon to awake out of our lethargic ſleep, that we may do what poſſibly we can to ſave the nations we belong to, from approaching deſolations: or if that cannot be, that we may, at leaſt, ſave our own ſouls in the day of the Lord. For ſeeing we are like to feel the effects of the new conjunction of France and Spain, the election of a young politic Pope, and the apoſtacy of ſome Proteſtant princes to the Romiſh intereſt (which, together with the impieties and ſcepticiſm of a great many within ourſelves, are, I am ſure, no good prognoſtics), have we not juſt reaſon to prepare for remarkable revolutions? While, therefore, I think of theſe things, I cannot forbear to give a vent to my thoughts on the great and dark head of futurity, in preſenting you with ſome conjectures in relation to our times, founded upon Scripture-prophecy, as far as I underſtand it.

Therefore ſeeing this is the chief deſign of this Diſcourſe, which I have inſcribed to you, I hope ye will bear with me in giving you ſome brief account of the times we are fallen in, and what we may expect if we live much longer. Which I am the rather induced to do,

do, becauſe we are juſt now entering upon a new Age, from which we look back upon ſeventeen centuries, which have elapſed ſince our bleſſed Redeemer came into the world, and may therefore be allowed to conjecture, with ſome juſt ground perhaps of probability (for I do induſtriouſly avoid the fatal rock of poſitiveneſs, which ſo many apocalyptical men have ſuffered themſelves to ſplit upon) what part of the revelation remains yet to be accompliſhed.

But ſince I am to confine myſelf to a little compaſs here, as remembring I am writing no book properly, but an epiſtolary diſcourſe, prefatory to thoſe that follow, with which therefore it muſt keep ſome proportion; I ſhall content myſelf in giving you a few hints, towards the reſolution and improvement of that grand apocalyptical queſtion; When the reign of Antichriſtianiſm or the Papacy began?

There are two things therefore, which lie before me to be conſidered at this time.

I. I muſt fufil my promiſe in giving you a new reſolution of the grand apocalyptical queſtion concerning the riſe of the great Antichriſt, or Rome Papal. For when we have done this, and fixed this æra or epocha, we may by an eaſy conſequence, ſee the time of the final fall and deſtruction of this dreadful enemy.

II. I muſt in the next place, improve the reſolution of this queſtion, both theoretically as a key to unriddle the dark Apocalyptical times and periods; and practically, in order both to the regulation of your thoughts and

and the government of your lives, in ſome very weighty conſiderations deducible from thence.

The firſt thing therefore, which I have to do, is to attempt the reſolution of the principal apocalyptical queſtion concerning the riſe of Antichriſtianiſm.

Now in order to anſwer this diſtinctly (which hath exerciſed and wearied out all apocalyptical writers hitherto) there are ſome things I would premiſe as ſo many Poſtulata, which generally all are agreed in, and which Mr Mede, Dr More, Mr Durham, and Dr. Creſſener, have irrefragably proved. 1. That the Revelation contains * the ſeries of all the remarkable events and changes of the ſtate of the Chriſtian Church to the end of the world. 2. That † myſtical Babylon or the great whore, deſcribed there, doth ſignify Rome in an antichriſtian church-ſtate. 3. That therefore this cannot be Rome pagan properly, but Rome papal. 4. That the ‡ ſeven heads of the beaſt, or the ſeven kings, are the ſeven forms of government, which obtained ſucceſſively among the Romans: And ſeeing the * ſixth of theſe was that which was only in being in John's time (the former five having fallen before) that therefore conſequently, the ſeventh head, which under another conſideration is called the eighth, (the intervenient kingdom of the Oſtro-Goths being the ſeventh in number, tho' not properly Roman, and therefore, in that ſenſe, none of the heads of the Roman government) is the laſt ſpecies of government, and that which is called moſt peculiarly, and by a ſpeciality THE Beaſt, or Antichriſt.

Theſe

* Rev. iv. 1. and x. 5, 6, 7.
† Rev. xvii. 1. 5. 18.
‡ Rev. xvii. 10, 11.
* Ibid.

Theſe Poſtulata being ſuppoſed as certain (which I would reckon no difficult thing to prove, were it needful), I muſt, in the next place, premiſe two preliminary conſiderations, before I come directly to anſwer the queſtion itſelf.

The firſt is this: That the three grand Apocalyptical numbers of 1260 Days, 42 Months, and Time, Times and an half, are not only ſynchronical, but muſt be interpreted prophetically, ſo as years muſt be underſtood by days.

1260 Days
42 Months
Time
Times and a Half

That theſe three numbers are ſynchronical, will appear plain to any impartial conſiderer, that will be at pains to compare them, as we have them ſet down in this book of the Revelation, viz. the 1260 days, chap. xi. 3. and chap. xii. 6. the 42 Months, chap. xi. 2. and chap. xiii. 5. and the Time, Times and an half, chap. xii. 14. For it is clear, that the Gentiles treading down the holy city 42 Months, chap. xii. 2. is the cauſe of the witneſſes propheſying for 1260 Days in ſackloth, ver. 3. And is the woman or church's being in the wilderneſs for the ſame term of Days, chap. xii. 6. any other than a new repreſentation of the witneſſes propheſying in ſackcloth? Seeing this muſt be while the Beaſt is worſhipped and ſerved by the whole Roman world, during men's lunacy of 42 Months continuance, chap. xiii 5. And therefore ſeeing the woman is ſaid to be in the wilderneſs-ſtate of deſolation and perſecution for a Time, and Times, and half a Time, in order thus to be preſerved from the Beaſt and Serpent, as we ſee chap. xii. 14. It is likewiſe plain, that this number of three years and an half muſt be the very ſame with the two former numbers.

Chaps 11/3 12/6 11/2 13/5 12/14 12/2 3 12/6 c 13/5 c 12/14

Only

Only it is to be obſerved by the way, that this period of time, when it is mentioned in relation to the church, is ſpoken of with reſpect to the ſun, either as to his diurnal or annual rotation: Whereas when it is deſcribed in relation to the Beaſt's unſtable kingdom of night and darkneſs, it is made mention of with reſpect to the unconſtant luminary, which changes its face continually, while it makes our months. And hence it is that the church is repreſented, chap. xii. 1. under the emblem of a Woman clothed with the ſun, and the moon under her feet.

Now, as theſe numbers are ſynchronical, and the ſame; ſo it is eaſy to prove that they muſt be underſtood prophetically for years. I ſhall not inſiſt here, upon the conjecture of * a learned man; that there was no diurnal rotation of the earth before the fall, and conſequently no days of 24 hours, but only an annual rotation of this our planetary world: which he gives us as the original reaſon of the ſcripture's putting Days for years frequently. For whatever be in this, it is plain that the ſcripture ſpeaks thus in ſeveral places; by putting a leſſer number figuratively for a greater, as well as a definite one for a indefinite. Witneſs the appointment of the week of years, Exod. xxxiii. 10, 11. which is ſpoken of as if it were a week of days, ver. 12. the ſeventh year of which is therefore called Sabbatical, with reſpect to the ſeventh-day Sabbath. In the ſame way of ſpeaking, Ezekiel was commanded to ly 390 days on his left ſide, and 40 on his right, each day for a year, as God himſelf ſays, chap. iv. 5, 6. So, likewiſe, God puniſhed the murmuring Iſraelites with 40 years abode in the wilderneſs, with relation to the

* Whiſton's Theory of the Earth, page 8.79.81. See Hypoth. 3.

the 40 days that were ſpent in ſearching of the land of Canaan, Numb. xiv. 32. The ſeven years of Nebuchadnezzar's lycanthropy, is thus called, indefinitely, days or times, Dan. iv. 32, 34. Nay our Saviour himſelf ſpeaks in this dialect, when he calls the years of his miniſtry days, ſaying, "I do cures to-day, and to-morrow; and the third day I ſhall be perfected," Luke xiii. 32. But the moſt remarkable place to our purpoſe, is the famous prophely of Daniel's 70 weeks, or 490 days, chap. ix. 24. reaching down from the edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus, in his 20th year, Neh. ii. 1,—10. to our Saviour's ſuffering at Jeruſalem; which was exactly 490 prophetical years, not Julian ones: the not diſtinguiſhing of which, has hitherto confounded all interpreters, as I might ſhew at large, were this a proper place for it. But what the difference between theſe is, we ſhall quickly ſee.

Daniel 9 v 24
Nehem 2 v. 1-10
Julian

In the meantime, I am now to prove that the 1260 days are to be underſtood, in a prophetical ſenſe, for years: for, if I can prove this, it will neceſſarily follow, that the other numbers muſt be ſo interpreted alſo; ſince they are the ſame with this. Now, that the 1260 days cannot be taken literally, but prophetically, will appear from hence: That it is impoſſible to conceive, how ſo many great and wonderful actions, which are propheſied to fall out in that ſhort time, could happen during the ſpace of three ſolar years and an half; ſuch as, the obtaining power over all kindreds, tongues, and nations; the world's wondring at, and ſubmitting unto the beaſt's reign; and the ſetting up an image to the imperial head, and cauſing it to be worſhipped inſtead of the living emperor's, &c. And, beſides theſe things, ſeeing the 1260 days are the whole time of the papal

authority,

* a kind of Madneſs in which Persons have the quality of Beasts

authority, which is not to be totally deſtroyed until the great and remarkable appearance of Chriſt, upon the pouring out of the ſeventh vial; and that therefore Chriſt will have the honour of deſtroying him finally himſelf (though this iniquity began to work even in the apoſtolical times): therefore we may certainly conclude that it muſt take up ſome centuries of years to carry on this abomination that maketh deſolate. For though the Lord will gradually conſume or waſte this great adverſary by the ſpirit of his mouth, yet he will not ſooner aboliſh him than by the appearing of his own preſence, 2 Theſ. ii. 8. as * I chuſe both to render and underſtand the words.

The

* The learned Dr. Whitby, in his late Paraphraſe and Commentary upon the Epiſtles, does indeed advance a new notion on this verſe and chapter, viz. that the Jewiſh ſanhedrim, government and nation, is primarily and chiefly underſtood here by the apoſtle, as the Man of Sin and Antichriſt, both upon the account of their oppoſing themſelves to Chriſt and perſecuting of his followers, and upon the account alſo of their rebelling againſt the Romans. And he has ſaid ſo much for the proof of this, that it may be thought to contain a refutation of my interpretation of the place. But even upon the ſuppoſition that all that the Dr. ſays for his opinion ſhould be true; yet it will be found no way to invalidate what I advance here. For all that are acquainted with the Jewiſh and Apoſtolical writings know, that beſides a firſt ſenſe to be obſerved in propheſies, there is a ſecond and remoter one more tacitly inſinuated frequently as the principal deſign of the Spirit of God. I might ſhew this in innumerable inſtances, eſpecially in the ancient propheſies that relate to David, or ſome other perſon, in the firſt ſenſe, or typical one, but in the Meſſiah ultimately and compleatly. But I ſhall not inſiſt upon any thing of this kind now, ſeeing ſo many have done it already: and there is no need to do it here, ſeeing Dr. Whitby himſelf doth grant all I deſire, when he ſays in his Preface to this epiſtle, pag. 383. "But that I may not wholly differ from my brethren "in this matter, I grant theſe words may, in a ſecondary ſenſe (in "which expreſſion I only differ from the Dr. ſeeing I look upon it to

be

The Second preliminary conſideration is, That, in order to underſtand the prophetical years aright, we muſt reduce them to Julian years, or ſuch as are in uſe with us now in Europe.

This is no idle or chimerical inquiry; ſeeing the ignorance of this has miſled all our great apocalyptical men hitherto in their calculations; and yet unleſs we are able to adjuſt the difference between prophetical and Julian years, we muſt ſtill reckon at a venture, without any certainty of the truth and exactneſs of our arithmetic. Therefore that we may underſtand this difference, we are to remember, that the ancients were far more rude and indiſtinct in their calculation of time than we have been ſince. And indeed ſuch is their confuſion this way, that we are obliged to God's providence in giving us the exact compaſs of a prophetical year, even in this book, by fixing the ſynchroniſm of the three numbers above-mentioned. For by theſe it is determined, that 30 days make a month, and 12 of ſuch months a year. So that 1260 days being divided into three years and an half (or time, and times, and an half in the apocalyptical dialect), 360 days muſt make up a year, without the additional five days and odd hours and minutes, that are added, in the calculation of the Julian year. For the Julian (and Gregorian) months conſiſting, ſome of 30, and ſome of 31 days (excepting Fe-

" be the principal ſenſe, becauſe it is the ſecond), be attributed to the " Papal Antichriſt, or Man of Sin, and may be ſignally fulfilled in him, " in the deſtruction of him by the Spirit of Chriſt's mouth, he being " the ſucceſſor to the apoſtate Jewiſh church, to whom theſe characters " agree, as well as to her; and, therefore, in the Annotations I have " ſtill given a place to this interpretation alſo."

February only), and the years consequently of 365 days: there must needs be some considerable difference in the revolution of many centuries. Which difference appears still greater, if we consult the late curious astronomical calculations of Petavius, Tycho, Kepler, and others. But since their exactness hath only added 5 hours to every year (together with some minutes, firsts, seconds, &c. COMMUNIBUS ANNIS, which they themselves are not fully agreed in) I shall not be so nice upon this point, as to follow them exactly in all their criticisms this way. However since five hours additional to a year, arise to an entire day, in the revolution of 163 years, it ought not to be altogether neglected. But passing even these, and considering only the five days that are added to the 360, in our ordinary years, we will find that the 1260 days in the Revelation being reduced to years, are 18 years short of Julian years, in the prophetical reckoning, by reason of the additional days turned into years in the ordinary accounts now, above the apocalyptical reckoning. To demonstrate which, I present you with the following scheme.

THE PROPHETICAL YEAR.		THE JULIAN YEAR.
One - - -	360	365
	360	365
Two - - -	720	730
Three - - -	1080	1095
Half - - -	180	183
Three Years and a Half	1260	1278

Now

Now if, according to this computation, we ſubſtract 1260 apocalyptical years from 1278 Julian or Gregorian ones, (I call them ſo ORE ROTUNDO, overlooking the ſmaller meaſures of time) there remain 18 years to be cut off.

To apply this therefore to our deſign: If we may ſuppoſe that Antichriſt began his reign in the year 666, the additional 1260 years of his duration, were they Julian or ordinary years, would lead us down to the year 1866, as the laſt period of the ſeven-headed monſter. But ſeeing they are prophetical years only, we muſt caſt away 18 years, in order to bring them to the exact meaſure of time that the Spirit of God deſigns in this book. And thus the final period of papal uſurpations (ſuppoſing that he did indeed riſe in the year 666) muſt conclude with the year 1848. ⁂ ⁂ ⁂

And now that I have hinted at the time of Antichriſt's riſe, as the concluſion of the preliminary conſiderations, I muſt proceed to prove this to be in one ſenſe the true æra of the Papal Beaſt's reign. And here it is, that I find myſelf extremely ſtraitned, in diſcourſing of ſo great a ſubject in ſo narrow a compaſs. All, therefore, that I can ſay here, will amount to a few ſhort hints only, though perhaps no inconſiderable ones.

Seeing therefore, as I ſaid before, in the 4th poſtulatum, it is plain from Rev. xvii. 10. That the imperial government was the regnant head of the Roman Beaſt, at the time of the viſion: we have only the two following heads to conſider, as to their riſe and duration. Let theſe things, therefore, be minded here.

1. That

1. That the ſeventh head, or king of Rome (as I hinted before) whoſe character is, That he was immediately to ſucceed to the imperial government, and to continue but a ſhort ſpace, Rev. xvii. 10. That, I ſay, this government could be no other than that of the kingdom of the Oſtro-Goths in Italy.

For it is plain, That the imperial dignity was extinguiſhed in Italy, and in the Weſtern parts of the empire, by Odoacer the king of the Heruli, who forced Auguſtulus, the laſt ſprig of an emperor, to abdicate his throne and power, in the year 475, or 476, as others ſay. And though this Odoacer was ſoon deſtroyed by Theodoric, the king of the Oſtro-Goths; yet the ſame form of regal government was continued by Theodoric and his ſucceſſors. And though this kingdom continued for near 80 years, reckoning from Odoacer to Teias, yet the angel might juſtly call this a ſhort time; for ſo it was, if compared either with the preceding imperial or ſucceeding papal government. Which ſuggeſts a very ſtrong argument againſt ſome, who would make this ſeventh king to denote the oriental empire, which as it began long before this time, ſo laſted many centuries afterwards, and was not totally extinct till Mahomet the Great's time, in the year 1453. And ſurely this kingdom was ſufficient to conſtitute a new head of the Roman people, ſeeing Rome and Italy was ſubjected entirely to thoſe Gothiſh kings, and that they not only acted with the ſame authority that the emperors had uſed before (excepting that they abſtained from that title by a ſpecial providence, that they might not be confounded with that government), but were owned by the Senate and people of Rome as their ſuperiors, yea, by the emperors of the Eaſt alſo;

alſo; as might eaſily be proved from * hiſtorians, particularly † Caſſiodorus, who was chief miniſter of ſtate to two of thoſe kings.

Whence it doth plainly appear, that this kingdom of the Oſtro-Goths, was the ſeventh head, that was to continue a ſhort time. And that therefore it follows, 1. That the change wrought by Conſtantine the Great, both as to the ſeat and religion of the empire, could not be looked upon as a new head; ſeeing the old government in all other reſpects was continued. And, 2. Neither can any perſon juſtly ſuppoſe that the form of the government was altered, when the empire was divided into the Eaſt and Weſt; ſeeing in all other reſpects alſo the imperial authority and rule was preſerved. Therefore, 3. It follows alſo that the papal government was not regnant until the deſtruction of this Gothiſh kingdom in Italy: for there could not be two ſupreme heads of Rome at the ſame time.

Therefore, 2. We may conclude that the laſt head of the beaſt, which is the papal, did ariſe either immediately upon the extirpation of the Gothiſh kingdom, or ſome time after. But it could not riſe to its power immediately after, ſeeing Juſtinian did by the conqueſt of Italy revive the imperial government again there, which by that means was healed, after the deadly wound which the Heruli and the Goths had given it.

Though

* See Baron. ad Ann. 472, 475, &c. Petav. Ration. Temp. Lib. 7. cap. 5. Bellarm. de Tranſlat. Imp. Rom. Lib. 1. cap. 9, &c.

† In Lib. Variarum, Lib. 1. Ep. 23, 31, &c. Lib. 4. Ep. 45, &c. Lib. 3. Ep. 16, 18. Lib. 8. Ep. 2, 3, 4, &c.

Though, I confeſs, Juſtinian's conqueſts of Italy laid a foundation for the Pope's riſe, and paved the way for his advancement: both by the penal and ſanguinary laws which he made againſt all thoſe that diſſented from the Romiſh church, and by the confuſions that followed upon Narſus his bringing in the Lombards. For, during the ſtruggles of them and the Exarchat, the Pope played his game ſo, that the emperor Phocas found it his intereſt to engage him to his party, by giving him the title of ſupreme and univerſal biſhop.

Therefore we may juſtly reckon that the papal head took its firſt riſe from that remarkable year 606, when Phocas did, in a manner, devolve the government of the Weſt upon him, by giving him the title of univerſal biſhop. From which period, if we date the 1260 years, they lead us down (as I ſaid already) to the year 1866, ⁂ which is 1848, according to prophetical calculation. Or, if a bare title of this ſort be not thought ſufficient to conſtitute the Pope head of the Beaſt, we may reckon this two years later, viz. from the year 608, when Boniface the 4th did firſt publicly authorize idolatry, by dedicating the Pantheon to the worſhip of the Virgin Mary and all the ſaints.

Now it is very remarkable, that in the year 666, Pope Vitalian did firſt ordain that all public worſhip ſhould be in Latin. And, therefore, however the notion of * Irenæus has been of late ridiculed, who obſerved that the characteriſtical number of the beaſt, viz. 666, anſwering to the number of a man's name, was to be found

* Iræn. adv. Hæret. Lib. 5. cap. 30.

found in the word Λατεινος, from whence he concluded that he was to be a Roman; I cannot but think there is ſomething remarkable in this (even though the numerical letters of other words ſhould jump with this number alſo) not ſo much becauſe of the antiquity of the notion, as upon the account of the reaſon he ſuggeſts to us for this, when he ſays, that though he grants that other names (as that of ενανθας) may be ſo rendered, yet he fixed upon this, becauſe the * Latin monarchy is the laſt of all, and therefore the Beaſt muſt re-

* It ought to be obſerved here, that not only the Greek word, but even the Hebrew contains the number 666, in the numerical letters thereof, whether we make uſe of רומיה *Romana*, ſcil. *Sedes*, or רומעניש *Romanus* vel *Latinus*. As will appear from the following ſcheme.

ר	200	ר		200	λ	50	
ו	6	מ		40	α	1	
מ	40	ע		70	τ	300	
י	10	נ		50	ε	5	
י	10	ו		6	ι	10	
ה	400	ש		300	ν	50	
	666			666	ος	70	
						200	
						666	

And whereas Bellarmin objects, that *Latinus* ſhould be rendered by a ſingle *Iota*, and not by *ei*; he is exceedingly miſtaken: For not only Irenæus renders the word thus, but all the Greeks do the ſame, as is plain in innumerable inſtances; ſuch as in the names Αντονινος, Σαβινος; which the Romans pronounce *Antoninus*; *Sabinus*. Nay, the ancient Romans ſpake the ſame way as the Greeks, as is plain in *Plautus* and the Fragments of *Ennius*, with whom nothing is more common than *queis* for *quis*, *preimus* for *primus*, *capteivei* for *captivi*, *lateinei* for *latini*, &c.

relate to this or none. Wherein I ſuppoſe he alludes to Daniel's account of the four monarchies, chap. ii. 7. And indeed the little horn that aroſe out of the head of the fourth beaſt, chap. vii. 8. ſeems not unfitly to repreſent not only Antiochus Epiphanes, but the Papal Antichriſt, whoſe type he may therefore be ſuppoſed to be. For as he ſupplanted three kings, in alluſion to which, that little horn is ſaid to have plucked up three horns, before it, by the roots: So did the Papal government riſe alſo upon the ruins of the Exarchat, the Lombards, and the authority of the emperors in Italy.

I believe this account of Antichriſt's riſe will not be very acceptable to ſome, whoſe zeal for the Pope's downfal has made them entertain hope of living to ſee that remarkable time; which has made them invent plauſible ſchemes to prove that this great enemy was ſeated in his regal dignity long before the year 606. But if a man will trace truth impartially, he will have reaſon to think, that the riſe of this adverſary could not be before that time. Nay, I muſt tell you, that I do not reckon the full riſe of the Pope to the headſhip of the empire till a later date ſtill. For though the Pope got the title of univerſal biſhop at that time, yet he was afterwards, for a long time, ſubject, in temporal concerns, to the emperors. And, therefore, I cannot reckon him to have been, in a proper and full ſenſe, head of Rome, until he was ſo in a ſecular, as well as eccleſiaſtical ſenſe. And this was not until the days of Pipin, by whoſe conſent he was made a ſecular prince, and a great part of Italy given to him as Peter's patrimony. So that as Boniface the third

(and

(and his ſucceſſors), by aſſuming the title of univerſal biſhop, was the forerunner of Antichriſt, as Gregory the great propheſied he would be, who ſhould be known in the world by that proud title: So, likewiſe, we may conclude that Antichriſt was indeed come, when Paul the firſt became a temporal prince alſo. Phocas, therefore, did only proclaim the Pope to be the laſt head of Rome, in the apocalyptical ſenſe; but it was Pipin who gave him the ſolemn inveſtiture, and ſeated him on his throne, which Charlemain did afterwards confirm to him.

Now, as near as I can trace the time of this donation of Pipin, it was in or about the year 758, about the time that Pope Paul the firſt began to build the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. Now, if we make this the æra of the Papal kingdom, the 1260 years will not run out before the year 2018, according to the computation of Julian years: but, reducing theſe to prophetical ones, the expiration of the papal kingdom ends exactly in the year 2000, according to our vulgar reckoning. And if what I ſuggeſted above be true, that Antichriſt ſhall not be finally deſtroyed until the coming of Chriſt, then may this calculation be looked upon to be very conſiderable. For it has been a very ancient opinion, that the world would laſt only ſix thouſand years; that, according to the old traditional propheſy of the houſe of Elias, the world ſhould ſtand as many millenaries as it was made in days; and that, therefore, as there were two thouſand years from the creation to Abraham, without a written directory of religion, and two thouſand from thence to Chriſt, under the old economy of the law, ſo there would be two

Jews 6000

thouſand years more under the Meſſiah. So that after the militant ſtate of the Chriſtian church is run out, in the year 2000, it is to enter upon that glorious Sabbatical millenary, when the ſaints ſhall reign on the earth, in a peaceable manner, for a thouſand years more. After the expiration of which, Satan ſhall be let looſe to play a new game, and men ſhall begin to apoſtatize almoſt univerſally from the truth, gathering themſelves together, under the character of Gog and Magog, from the four corners or parts of the world, until they have reduced the church to a ſmall compaſs. But when they have brought the ſaints to the laſt extremity, Chriſt himſelf will appear in his glory, and deſtroy his enemies with fire from heaven, Rev. xx. 9. Which denotes the great conflagration, 2 Pet. iii. 10,&c. Which is followed with the reſurrection, and Chriſt's calling men before him into judgment. And, perhaps, the time of this judgment will take up the greateſt part or the whole of another millenary of years; that, as there were four thouſand years from the creation to his firſt coming, there may be four from thence, to his triumphant entry into heaven with all his ſaints. For though the Scripture call this time a day, yet we know what Peter ſays, that a thouſand years and a day, are the ſame thing in divine reckoning *. But that all men that ever lived ſhould be publicly judged in a day, or year, or century, ſo as to have all their life and actions tried and ſearched into, is to me I confeſs inconceivable, not indeed in relation to God, but in relation to men and angels, who muſt be convinced of the equity of the procedure and ſentence of the Judge.

But

* 2 Pet. iii. 8.

But to return, I cannot forbear to take notice of one thing here, that the year 758, was the year 666 from the perſecution of Domitian, when John was in Patmos, and wrote this book (as Tertullian, Ireneus, Origen, Euſebius, Jerom and all the ancients, excepting Epiphanius, tell us), which, though ſome ſay was A. C. 95, was, moſt probably, in or about the year 92, the perſecution of Domitian having begun two years before. So that here we have another characteriſtical mark of the number of the Beaſt.

And now, I hope, I have ſaid enough of the future part of time, as to the general idea which, I think, the Revelation gives of it. But I muſt proceed one ſtep further with you, and conſider under what revolution of time we are at preſent; that we may thence ſee what we are to expect, and how we are to act.

So that here I find myſelf inſenſibly taken off from any further direct proſecution of the queſtion propoſed by way of anſwer thereunto. And,

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Therefore, II. I proceed to improve what I have ſaid, as to this queſtion, both theoretically and practically.

And, 1ſt, I ſhall advance ſomething here, as a theoretical improvement of what I have ſaid upon the former head. For by this key, we may attain, in a great meaſure, to unlock the dark apocalyptical periods and times: thoſe, I mean, that relate to the continuance of the Papal power, both as to his gradual growth and increaſe firſt, and his decay afterwards, until his laſt and final deſtruction. And, in relation to theſe,

the

the far greateſt part of the Apocalypſe muſt be underſtood.

Now, in order to this performance, I muſt premiſe this one thing; viz. That the ſeven Seals, Trumpets and Vials (in which is contained the order and ſeries of the whole apocalyptical propheſy, and to the explication and illuſtration of which, all the other particular viſions are ſubſervient); that, I ſay, theſe are joined together by the link of the ſeventh Seal, and ſeventh Trumpet; ſo as the ſeventh Seal doth, as it were, produce or include the ſeven Trumpets, and the ſeventh Trumpet the ſeven Vials, in the ſame manner.

This I ſhould reckon no difficult thing to demonſtrate, but that it would be too long to inſiſt upon it in this place. And ſeeing Mr. Durham has done it, in a great meaſure, already, I paſs it now the more eaſily. Only let me deſire you to conſider, that it was not until after the opening of the ſeventh Seal, that John ſaw the angels with the ſeven Trumpets, chap. viii. 1, 2. And that it was after the ſounding of the ſeventh Trumpet alſo, that he tells us, he ſaw ἄλλο σημειον μεγα και θαυμαζον, another ſign, great and wonderful, chap. xv. 1. which was the viſion of the Vials. So that I wonder that Mr. Mede, Dr. More, and almoſt all others, have ſuffered themſelves to be confounded in their interpretations, by reaſon of their not obſerving this, and, conſequently, by jumbling ſome of the Trumpets with the Seals, and moſt of the Vials with the Trumpets.

Now, this being ſuppoſed, we will find the ſeries of time run in the following order, according to this three-

threefold ſeptenary of periods, which do inſenſibly run out one into the other.

The firſt ſeptenary of Seals relates to the Chriſtian church, during the ſtate of the Roman empire. And theſe do accordingly run in this order.

The firſt Seal exhibits the ſtate of the church, under the conduct of a glorious Rider on a white horſe, having a bow in his hand, and a crown given unto him, who went out conquering and to conquer, chap. vi. 2. Under which emblem, Chriſt himſelf is repreſented, going forth upon his conqueſts over Jews and Gentiles. And, as this relates to Chriſt's firſt victory over his enemies, after his commiſſion to his diſciples to preach the goſpel to all nations, Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. and the pouring down of his Spirit, for this end, on the day of Pentecoſt, Acts ii. So, the full completion of it is not until the end of time. For after all other horſemen and enemies of the church have done their utmoſt againſt Chriſt and his people, we find this Horſeman leading them all in triumph as his captives, and proceeding in his conqueſts to make a full and final end of them. For which, ſee chap. xix. 11, 12, &c. So that this Seal begins with An. 33 or 34, and does not end until the end of time, as to its full completion. But if we reckon it only in relation to the beginning of the next Seal (Chriſt's conqueſts being darkened, as to the outward view of men, by what follows), we ſhall ſee that immediately.

The ſecond Seal, chap. vi. 3, 4. under the emblem of a rider upon a red horſe (who had a great ſword given him, in order to take peace from the earth, and

to

to engage men in wars), repreſents the ſtate of the empire from the time that Nero made war on the Jews, An. 66; and ſo contains the civil wars of Galba, Otho and Vitellius, when men did ſo remarkably kill one another; and the wars of Veſpaſian and Titus againſt the Jews, compleated afterwards by the terrible deſtruction of that nation under Hadrian; together with his other wars, and the preceding perſecutions of Domitian and Trajan, and the conqueſts of this laſt prince. So that as this begins with An. 66, it ends with Hadrian's wars, An. 134, or with his life, An. 138.

3 Seal

The third Seal, chap. vi. 5, 6. begins, therefore, with An. 138; where, under the hieroglyphic of a rider on a black horſe, with a pair of ballances in his hand, to weigh and meaſure all things exactly, is ſet forth the excellent reigns of the admirable Antonines, Pius and Philoſophus. And, therefore, this Seal runs out in the year 180.

The fourth Seal, chap. vi. 7, 8. repreſents the Roman horſe turned pale, and the rider changed from a grave and awful judge to a murderer, ſo as to be called Death, by reaſon of his throwing ſo many into Hades, or the future ſtate, by immature deaths. Where we have a very remarkable account of the ſtate of the Roman empire, after the deceaſe of the brave Antoninus Philoſophus, under the barbarities of Commodus, the ſhort-lived reigns of Pertinax and Didius Julianus, but eſpecially under the ſevere and bloody Septimius Severus, in his wars againſt Perſcennius Nigerius, Albinus and others, and under his ſon Caracalla; and, afterwards, under Macrinus, Heliogabulus (the reign of the excellent Alexander Severus being but a ſhort breathing

to

to the empire and the Chriſtians), Maximinus, and his ſon Pupienus, Balbinus and Gordianus, and Philippus and his ſon: With whoſe death, I think, this Seal runs out, in the year 250. And, with the death of theſe, Philippi, who favoured Chriſtianity, the four Evangelical living Creatures (which our tranſlation renders Beaſts, moſt unaccountably) ceaſe to ſpeak openly.

The fifth Seal, therefore, diſcovers the ſtate of the Chriſtian church to be exceedingly languiſhing and melancholy, as if the ſaints were all ſlain, praying and crying for vengeance againſt their perſecutors, while they are repreſented as lying under the altar, chap. vi. 9, 10, 11. So that this period begins with Decius, the firſt univerſal perſecutor of Chriſtians (for all the former perſecutions, under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, and the Antonines, were but provincial ones, and that of Maximinus againſt the miniſters only), who began his reign and perſecution together in the year 250, and was ſeconded in it by Valerian (for the ſhort reigns of Trebonianus Gallus and Æmilianus hardly deſerve to be taken notice of in this caſe). Now, the ſouls of the martyrs are deſired to reſt patiently, until the confuſed reign of Galienus ſhould run out, and the thirty tyrants, that roſe in his time, ſhould be cut off, together with the ſhort-lived Claudius Gothicus; ſeeing, after that little interval, their brethren were alſo to ſuffer ſtill further, under Rome Pagan, viz. under Aurelian, and afterwards (when the ſhort reigns of Tacitus, Probus, Carus, and Carinus ſhould be over), under the cruel perſecution raiſed againſt them by Diocleſian and Maximianus elder and younger, together with Severus and Maximinus. So that this Seal ends with the concluſion

of this laſt perſecution begun by Dioclesian, and ſo expires, A. C. 306.

6 Seal

The ſixth Seal, chap. vi. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. gives us an account of God's gracious anſwer, at length, to the prayer of the ſlain witneſſes, in the deſtruction of Rome Pagan, after their cup was made full by the laſt cruel perſecution. And this is deſcribed, as if heaven and earth were come to an end. For ſo the prophets uſe to repreſent the ruin of kingdoms and monarchies, as we ſee, among other places, Jer. iv. 24. Iſa. xiii. 10. and xxiv. 21. 23. Joel ii. 10. So that this Seal contains the great and terrible wars of Conſtantine the Great, againſt all thoſe laſt tyrants, from the year 306, to the death of the laſt Pagan emperor, Licinius, Ann. 324.

7 Seal

The ſeventh Seal, therefore, chap. viii. 1. repreſents the ſhort breathing of the church, and peace of the Chriſtians, under Conſtantine, from the year 313, when he firſt publiſhed an edict in their favour; and, particularly, from the death of Licinius, Ann. 324, to his own deceaſe, in the year 337, immediately upon which, the ſcene alters: And then begins

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2 Septenary of Trumpets

The ſecond Septenary of Trumpets; which gives us an account of the ſtate of the church, in relation to the gradual growth and increaſe of her Antichriſtian enemies, though in a way, alſo, of judgment upon them: Which I repreſent to you in the following ſeries and order.

1 Trumpet

The firſt Trumpet, chap. viii. 7. began a little after Conſtantine's death, in the wars between his eldeſt and

and youngeſt ſon, or at the death of the firſt in battle, and of the laſt by the uſurpation of Magnentius, which was a kind of mixt ſtorm, of hail, fire and blood. The continuance of it, was in the perſecutions againſt the orthodox by Conſtantius and Valens, with the intervention of that againſt all Chriſtians by Julian the apoſtate. And the concluſion of it ſeems to be the uſurpation of Maximus upon the death of Gratianus, and afterwards the death of Valentinian the Second, and finally the wars and death of Theodoſius. So that it began with the year 339, and ended Ann. 395.

The ſecond Trumpet, chap: viii. 8, 9. repreſents a great kingdom, under the emblem of a mountain (ſee Jer. li. 25.) burning with fire (i. e. in a cruel and fierce manner), and thrown into the midſt of the body politic, or empire of Rome, repreſented by the ſea (ſee chap. xviii. 15.); by which the third part of it became blood. By which we are, unqueſtionably, to underſtand the irruption of the barbarous nations of the Vandals and Goths into the Roman dominions. This began about the death of Theodoſius, and made a formidable progreſs (An. 405) in the days of Arcadius and Honorious, by Radagiſus, and afterwards Alaricus, who took Rome, An. 410. And it was continued during the inroads of Athaulphus the Goth (who pillaged the great city, An. 414.), and of Genſericus the Vandal, and of Attila the Hun into Italy and other Roman provinces, which they and others, about that time, waſted miſerably, to the year 455, and afterwards to the year 476.

The third Trumpet, chap. viii. 10, 11. doth plainly repreſent the deſtruction of the Weſtern empire, by

a ſtar falling from the heaven of its glory, as a burning lamp. For after it had ſtruggled with its fatal deſtiny, under the obſcure Cæſars, Avitus, Majoranus, Severus, &c. it did at length expire with Auguſtulus, An. 475, or 476. This ſtar was called Wormwood, becauſe of the bitter troubles this brought upon the empire. For the Oſtro-Goths planted themſelves in Italy, and reigned as arbitrarily as the emperors had ever done. So that this period began with the kingdom of the Oſtro-Goths, An. 476, and ended with it, An. 553.

4 Trumpets

The fourth Trumpet, chap. viii. 12. brings yet further deſolations on Rome, by darkening its ſplendor and glory, repreſented by the eclipſing of the Sun, for a third part of it; and the Moon and Stars alſo, in a like manner. By which we are to underſtand, no doubt, the decay of the imperial power and authority in the Weſt, by the Lombards, and the Exarchat afterwards. So that this Trumpet laſted from the year 568 to the year 758, when Pipin made the Pope, in a manner, king of Rome (who, in requital of his kindneſs, gave his ſon, Charlemain, the empty title of Emperor of Rome; making, thus, the ſucceeding Weſtern empire an image of the ancient one, Rev. xiii. 14, 15.), by which both the power of the Lombards, of the Exarchat, and the Emperors did, as it were, terminate in him. And, as the Exarchat ended An. 752, ſo the Lombards were totally expelled Italy a little after, viz. in the year 773.

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3 fold Wo

Now follows a threefold wo, which makes up the ſubject of the three following Trumpets, which are therefore called the Wo-Trumpets, becauſe of the remark-

remarkableneſs of theſe judgments above the former: Therefore,

The fifth Trumpet, chap. ix. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. brings forth the firſt Wo. The deſcription of which is long, and the figures many; ſo that I cannot be ſuppoſed to ſay much on ſo large a head here. Let a ſhort account ſatisfy you. In the firſt place, therefore, we are to underſtand, that no other than the biſhop of Rome can be meant by the ſtar that fell from heaven. For this is the ſymbol of the goſpel-miniſtry, chap. i. 20. and agrees not, therefore, with Mahomet. Neither can the place this ſtar fell from, viz. heaven, which denotes the glorious and holy ſtate of the church, agree to any other, than one that apoſtatizeth from the ſervice of Chriſt to the ſervice of the world and Satan. So that, as ancient Babylon is ſaid to fall from the heaven of temporal glory, as Lucifer, or the morning-ſtar of the nations, Iſa. xiv. 12. So is the biſhop of Rome ſaid to fall from the ſpiritual heaven of his primitive glory and purity; being degenerated from the firſt angel of light in the church, to be the grand angel of darkneſs; and becoming thus the prince of incarnate devils, the key of the bottomleſs pit (which he and his followers boaſt of as the keys of St. Peter), being put into his hand by the old Serpent, for carrying on the black deſigns of hell. 2. The dark pitchy ſmoak that came out of the pit, upon his opening it, was certainly deſigned to ſignify the ignorance that did then prevail in the world, and the groſs and horrid errors that were ſpread abroad and vended for divine truths by the ſottiſh monks, that then ſwarmed abroad under various names and leaders, and particularly the idolatry that then began to prevail univerſally in the world.

world. For, about that time, though ſeveral of the Greek emperors did ſtiffly oppoſe image-worſhip, yet the Popes did at length prevail, though multitudes on both ſides loſt their lives in this quarrel. 3. The locuſts that came out of this ſmoke were the Saracens, that followed Mahomet, who compiled the model of his religion, by the help of Jews and Chriſtian heretics, eſpecially of Sergius, a Neſtorian monk, whom the * Arabian and Turkiſh writers call Bahira. Theſe Arabian locuſts (whoſe hegyra or æra is dated from Mahomet's flight from Mecca, Ann. Dom. 622, a little after the Pope got the title of Univerſal Biſhop, An. Dom. 606) did, in a little time, ſo increaſe, that they conquered or over-run a great many countries in a very little time. For they overflowed Perſia, Syria, Egypt, Paleſtine, and other places, about the year 729. They extended their arms into India, An. 643.; and into Spain, An. 711. and ravaged ſeveral parts of France, from An. Dom. 721. to the year 726, till they were routed, at length, with a great ſlaughter, by Charles Martel, about the year 728. However, they continued after that, to be a ſcourge to the Chriſtians, eſpecially under the reign of the great Almanzor, until about the year 772, when † the Turks began to grow famous. So that the five months, or 150 years, wherein they tormented the Chriſtians (though they had no power to deſtroy their empire) was from 622 to 722. But we muſt not imagine, that theſe five months of years, are the period of this Trumpet. For this muſt be reckoned from 758 to Ann. 1067, or thereabouts, when Tan-

* See Dr. Prideaux his Life of Mahomet, pag. 45, 46, 47, 48.

† See the Authors of the Turkiſh Hiſtory, put out by Conradus Clauſerus.

Tangrolipix the Turk put an end to the Saracen empire, by conquering the Caliph of Perſia. Now, therefore, in the fourth place (to paſs by the other things obſervable in this Saracen Wo-Trumpet), let it be conſidered, that as the apoſtate biſhop of Rome is called the Angel or Meſſenger of the bottomleſs pit: So Mahomet, the king and prophet of theſe Saracen locuſts, is called Abaddon or Apollyon, ver. 11. i. e. a Deſtroyer; as carrying on his religion by ſword and violence: from whence his locuſt-followers are ſaid, ver. 10. to have ſtings like Scorpions, by which they poiſoned the ſouls of men, if they did at all ſpare their bodies: for they were, in other reſpects, ſwift and ſtrong as horſes, and had faces like men, in their reaſoning, as well as fighting, for their ſuperſtition; adorned with hair like women, appearing ſoft, and inſinuating at firſt view, though armed with lions' teeth, as being fierce and cruel. By reaſon of which qualifications they got many victories, and are, therefore, repreſented as crowned with crowns of gold, ver. 7, 8, 9. But, upon the whole matter, this Trumpet, as it ſuppoſes the riſe of the Saracen empire, from the æra of the Hegyra 622; and the begun riſe of the Pope, from the year 606 or 608. So, after 5 months, or 150 years, i. e. to the year 772, the Saracen preparations continued, and the Papal from 606, or 608, to 756, or 758. So that the duration of this, begins with An. Dom. 758, and expires, in relation to that part of it that concerns the Saracens, about the year 1060. But in as far as it relates to the Popiſh Antichriſtian party, it is continued down through the next Trumpet, and the laſt both. But ſeeing the Saracens are brought in here as a ſcourge to the worſhippers of the Beaſt, the Turks ſucceeding them in this work; therefore the Trumpet is denominated from this viſible

ſcene

ſcene of affairs, and we muſt accordingly ſuppoſe that it ends with them.

The ſixth Trumpet, therefore, which is called the ſecond Wo, brings in the Turks upon the ſtage of the Roman empire; who are repreſented as four angels or meſſengers of judgment, chap. xiii. 13, 14, 15, &c. which were bound on the other ſide of the river Euphrates for a time; but are now let looſe to paſs that river, and make their inroads into the Roman empire, and to erect themſelves into a monarchy upon the ruins of it. Now they are called Four Angels, becauſe they were then divided into four Sultanies or principalities, as their embaſſadors told the emperor Juſtin, in the year 570, as is related by one of the Byzantine hiſtorians, and taken notice of by all * writers on this head. For, at their remarkable paſſing the River Euphrates, they were under the command of Solyman Shahum and his three ſons; and when he was drowned in the paſſage, they brought themſelves under four other captains, viz. Otrogules and his three ſons; of whom one was the famous Ottoman, who a little after laid the foundations of that great empire, over which his family keeps the ſceptre to this day. They are deſcribed as Horſemen, for ſo they generally were, fighting on horſeback, for the moſt part, of which the Horſe's Tail is ſtill a monument, being uſed as their chief enſign of honour and command. Their number was prodigious, and might be, at that time, perhaps, exactly two hundred thouſand thouſand, as it ſeems to be here aſſerted: for they ſeldom ſent out an army of fewer than

* See Pocock's Supplem. ad Abul-phar, pag. 106—108. and Leunclav. Hiſt. pag. 86.

than a thouſand thouſand fighting men at once. Their poliſhed breaſt-plates repreſented fire, when ſhone upon by the Sun: and their horſes are ſaid to be like lions, for fierceneſs. And ſeeing fire-arms began then to be uſed in war (of which they had great ſtore, together with cannon of prodigious bigneſs, which did facilitate their taking of cities; and particularly Conſtantinople), their ſhooting theſe on horſeback, is repreſented as if the fire and ſmoke and brimſtone had come out of their horſes mouths, their pieces being diſcharged over their heads. With theſe they killed the bodies of men; and with their tails, which had heads alſo, they killed the ſouls of thoſe poor creatures that were ſtung or bit with their poiſonous doctrines; inſomuch that the third part of men, i. e. the third part of the ancient Roman empire (viz. that part which fell to Conſtantius, when Conſtantine divided the whole among his three ſons) was deſtroyed and conquered by them. Now, if we enquire into the time of this Trumpet, we have an exact calculation given of it. For they are ſaid to be prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year: An hour being ever uſed indefinitely in this book for a ſeaſon or period of time, we are accordingly to take it here. But days, years and months, being uſed definitely always, we muſt likewiſe interpret them ſo here alſo. So that the ſenſe of the place is, that the Turks were looſed from Euphratus, as being prepared inſtruments in the hand of God, for the ruin of the Grecian empire, for a certain hour or ſeaſon; even for a day, and a month, and a year. For in that period of time they deſtroyed the Eaſtern empire. For a prophetical year being 360, and a month 30; theſe, with the addition of one more, make up the period of 391 years. Now, we took notice before, that in

or about the year 1067, i. e. 1062 of prophetical reckoning, Trangrolipix erected the Turkiſh empire upon the ruins of that of the Saracens. From thence, therefore, if we compute the 391 years, we are led down to the year 1458, according to our ordinary computation; but, according to prophetical reckoning, to the remarkable year 1453, when Mahomet the Great took Conſtantinople, and ſo erected his own empire upon the ruins of the Grecian. For as it is very remarkable that John does not make the period of 391 years to be the whole duration of the Turkiſh empire, but only its preparation for after-action, from its firſt riſe to its higheſt exaltation; ſo we ſee how exactly this is fulfilled in the event; which, therefore, I hope, is no unedifying ſpeculation.

Now, ſeeing there is a remarkable ſtop and void, as it were, between the end of the ſixth Trumpet and the beginning of the ſeventh, which is filled up with the account of the ſlaying of the Witneſſes, in chap. xi. I do humbly conceive, that whatever particular ſlaughters of the ſaints were before, or may be afterwards, the great ſlaughter muſt have been during that interval of time. For this could not be during the height of the two former Woes upon Antichriſt and his followers. And much leſs can it be ſuppoſed to be after the ſound of the ſeventh Trumpet, and while God's laſt plagues upon the Beaſt are a-pouring out. I do therefore reckon, that the Witneſſes who propheſied in ſackcloth from the beginning of Papal ſuperſtitions, were the honeſt Piemontois, Albigenſes and Waldenſes; who were ſlain at length, after they had ſtood the ſhock of all former attacks, particularly that of Simon Monfort, with his 500,000 Croiſſades, whom Innocent the 3d. divert-

diverted from the Saracen war, in order to extirpate that good people, about the year 1416, when John Huſs, and afterward Jerom of Prague, were burnt, but came not to its height until the Bohemian Calixtines complied with the Council of Baſil, An. 1434. after which, the faithful Taborites were totally ruined, as well as their brethren in Piedmont, France, &c. which happened about the year 1492. For they being deſtroyed, the Calixtines were no better than the dead carcaſes (as they are called, ver. 8.) or corps of the former living Witneſſes; over which the Popiſh party did triumph: for they looked upon them as ſtanding trophies of their victory, and therefore did not think fit to kill them further, or bury them out of their ſight. For it is ſaid, ver. 7, 8. that after they had finiſhed their teſtimony, the Beaſt did make war upon them, και αποκτενει αυτους και τα πτωματα, αυτου, &c. He killed them, and their corps alſo, (for the additional words, in our verſion, SHALL LY, are not in the original, and do but mar the ſenſe) or their bodies (for ſome readings have it σωματα), in the ſtreet of the great city, i. e. in Bohemia, one ſtreet of the papal dominions, or the great city Rome, in a large ſenſe. For I find that, towards the end of the fifteenth century, the Witneſſes were, in a manner, wholly extinct. For * Comenius tells us, that about the year 1467, the Waldenſes in Auſtria and Moravia, had complied ſo far, as to diſſemble their religion, and turn to Popery in profeſſion and outward compliance. † The Taborites, in the mean time, upon their refuſing to do ſo, were ſo deſtroyed, that it was much that ſeventy of them

* Hiſt. Perſ. Eccl. Bohem. ch. 20. ſect. 4, 5. pag. 70, 71.
† Ibid. ch. 20. ſect. 3.

them could get together, to conſult about continuing their church, and about finding out ſome qualified perſon to be their miniſter, for they had none left, An. 1467. And ſo low was the church of Chriſt then, that when the hidden remains of the Taborites (who were called Speculani, from their lurking in dens and caves) ſent out four men (as the ſame author relates in another * book), to travel, one through Greece and the Eaſt, another to Ruſſia and the North, a third to Thrace, Bulgaria and the neighbouring places, and a fourth to Aſia, Paleſtine and Egypt; they did all, indeed, ſafely return to their brethren, but with this ſorrowful news, that they found no church of Chriſt, that was pure, or free from the groſſeſt errors, ſuperſtition and idolatry. This was in the year 1497. And when they ſent two of their number, two years afterwards, viz. Luke Prage and Thomas German, to go into Italy, France and other places, to ſee if there were any of the old Waldenſes left alive; they returned with the ſame melancholy news as the former had done, that they could neither find nor hear of any remaining; only they were informed of the martyrdom of Savanarolla (who ſuffered in the year 1498), and they were told of ſome few remains of the Piemontois, that were ſcattered and hid among the Alps, but no body knew where. Now, a few years after this, even the few remains of the Taborites were found out and perſecuted, hardly any eſcaping; ſo that A. C. 1510, ſix ſuffered together publicly; and, the year following, that famous martyr Andreas Paliwka, who, I think, was the laſt of that period. From whoſe death, in the end of the year 1511, or beginning of 1512, to the dawning of the reforma-

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* Comenius in his Short Hiſtory of the Bohemian Church, prefixed to his Exhortation to the Church of England, Sect. 66. pag. 40.

tion, by the firſt preaching of Carolaſtadius and Zuinglius (who appeared at leaſt a year before Luther, as * Hottinger and others tell us), there was only about three years and a half, which anſwers, as near as can be, to the three days and a half of the unburied ſtate of the Witneſſes. So that the Spirit's entering into the Witneſſes, ver. 11. began with the year 1516, if not the year before, though this appeared moſt remarkably when Luther oppoſed the Pope publicly, An. 1517. They were not only enlivened, but (to explain the words of John, ver. 11. a little further) they roſe up upon their feet, An. 1529, when ſo many princes and free cities in Germany, proteſted againſt the Edict of Worms and Spire, and ſo got the name of Proteſtants. They heard a voice, from heaven, ſaying, Aſcend hither, ver. 12. i. e. to power and peace; when Maurice of Saxony beat the Emperor Charles, An. 1552. And, accordingly, they did, after that, aſcend to the heaven of honour, reſt and ſecurity, as if they had been wafted up by a cloud, and that in the ſight even of their enemies; when the Proteſtant Religion was eſtabliſhed and legally ſettled and allowed of, in the year 1555, which was continued and confirmed by Maximilian and Rulolph afterwards. In whoſe days the church began to be ſettled in ſeveral other countries, viz. in England, Scotland, Denmark, Swedeland, Switzerland and the Low Countries. Now, it is obſervable, that, in this period of time, when the Witneſſes finiſhed their teſtimony, or were about to do ſo, the Turks took Conſtantinople, An. 1453. which I take to be deſigned by the earthquake that deſtroyed the tenth part of the Roman dominions, ver. 13. for the Grecian empire was reduced, before that, from being the third part of that

* Hiſt. Reform. vol. 1.

that empire, to be the tenth part only. So that Mahomet's prevailing over the Greek Church, and the Pope's conqueſts over the Weſtern Chriſtians, was much about a time, and therefore ſaid to be in the ſame hour or period of time, i. e. before the ſixth Trumpet ended, and before the ſeventh began; for the ſixth Trumpet, is the hour of the Turkiſh Wo. And indeed their triumph was much of the ſame kind alſo. For, as the Papiſts triumphed only over the dead bodies of the witneſſes, i. e. over the Calixtines (who were no longer living witneſſes, the Taborites being all gone, and having overcome their enemies by their blood, and the word of their teſtimony), ſo the Turkiſh triumph was only over ſeven thouſand names of men, i. e. over the remaining Eaſtern Chriſtians, who were ſo degenerated, in all reſpects, that they were only names or ſhadows of true Chriſtians. Only, whereas the Grecians did yet own themſelves to be the ſame in profeſſion with their anceſtors, and ſo were the ſame with them, as to name, the Calixtines were even debarred that privilege.

Theſe things being therefore conſidered (which I could eaſily enlarge upon, were I not confined at this time), I think it is abundantly plain, that the great ſlaughter of the witneſſes muſt have been preciſely at the time I have mentioned. For it could not be till Antichriſt was at his higheſt pitch of power and grandeur, which was not before this time. And it was not poſſible that it ſhould be after the ſeventh Trumpet ſounded, and the Vials began to be poured out; ſeeing the Witneſſes were not only riſen then, but were the inſtruments of this laſt and greateſt Wo to the worſhippers of the Beaſt. And, therefore, we find, chap. xi. 14, 15.

15, &c. that as ſoon as the Witneſſes aroſe, the ſecond Wo ended and the third commenced in the begun exaltation of the ſaints and ſervants of God. And it is to me altogether inconceivable, that the Witneſſes ſhould be riſen, and the Antichriſtian intereſt decline; and yet that the Witneſſes ſhould be entirely cut off during ſuch a period. So that I am almoſt bold, on this head (though I am reſolved to propoſe my apocalyptical thoughts only by way of probable conjecture), to affirm, that it is impoſſible, morally ſpeaking, that the Witneſſes can ever be ſo entirely ſlain, as they have been before, whatever particular and provincial perſecutions they may be under for a time, and whatever formidable appearances there may be againſt the Proteſtant intereſt every-where. Againſt this aſſertion I can foreſee no objection of moment, excepting one; and this is, That ſeeing the Witneſſes are ſaid to propheſy all the 1260 days of the Beaſt's reign in ſackcloth, and to be ſlain only when they have finiſhed their teſtimony, ver. 3, 7. It ſeems therefore very ſtrange to ſay, that they ſhall be ſlain during the time of their 1260 days or years' propheſy, and ſo long before the end of them. To which I anſwer, that, in ver. 3. there are two things ſpoken of, with reſpect to the oppoſers of Antichriſt. The firſt is, that they are called Witneſſes or Martyrs, againſt the abominations of that enemy. And the ſecond is, that they are ſaid to preach or propheſy againſt that intereſt. Now, it is only in the ſecond ſenſe that they are ſpoken of, in relation to the whole 1260 days. So that, though the προφητεια, or Witneſs-bearing of the ſaints, continue, in a large and general ſenſe, for 1260 years (and that, for the moſt part, in ſackcloth, becauſe of the conſtant troubles they meet with from that reſtleſs ene-

enemy), yet their μαρτυρια, or Witneſs-bearing by martyrdom and ſufferings, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, relates only to the time of their low and obſcure ſtate, during the rage of the Papiſts, before the ſounding of the ſeventh Trumpet. Now it is not ſaid (though, perhaps, this was never taken notice of before), that the Witneſſes were killed after their whole propheſy or preaching was over, or after the 1260 days were run out; but only, that after their μαρτυρια, or Teſtimony for Chriſt, by ſuffering, was over; that then, I ſay, they were univerſally ſlain and cut off, ver. 7. Now, though there have been many perſecutions ſince the reformation, and the ſounding of the ſeventh Trumpet, yet they were never univerſal ones. Beſides, that the difference is great, between the Witneſſes before and ſince that time, in this reſpect; for, ſince Luther's appearing, our religion has been eſtabliſhed publicly in ſeveral nations, and authoriſed by law, in oppoſition to Popery, which it never was before. But, to proceed,

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The ſeventh Trumpet ſounds, chap. xi. 14, &c. immediately upon the end of the fixth, i. e. upon the riſing of the Witneſſes. Now, as the 13th and 14th chapters are but further repreſentations of the ſtate of affairs under the ſix Trumpets preceding, relating to the condition both of the church and Antichriſtian party: So the 15th and 16th chapters are preliminary to the period of the ſeven vials being poured out upon the Papacy and its dominions. Of which Viſions I have a great many things to ſay, but I muſt curb myſelf now, leſt I prove too tedious. I ſhall, therefore, only put you in mind of what I hinted before, that the ſeventh Trumpet comprehends the ſeven Vials. For

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theſe are but the parts of it, which gradually deſtroy the Papal intereſt, which had encreaſed under the former Trumpets. As, therefore, this period brings in reformation, and, by various ſteps, makes the kingdoms of the world (which, before, were under Antichriſt), to change ſo far and ſo wonderfully, as to become the kingdoms of God and Chriſt, chap. xi. 14, &c. So, after a general, but glorious, account of the ſtate of the church from the reformation, chap. xiv. and a general account of the Vials to be poured out on the Popiſh party during the ſame period, chap. xv. we have a diſtinct account of the pouring out of theſe ſeven Vials, chap. xvi. in obedience to the great voice out of the temple, ver. 1. which is but a repetition of the ſounding of the ſeventh Trumpet, chap. xi. 14. under a new repreſentation of it.

The third and laſt ſeptenary, therefore, is that of the vials, or laſt plagues and judgments upon Rome Papal: which, as far as I can, I ſhall explain, by a diſtinct account of ſuch of them as I reckon to be fulfilled, and by ſome few conjectures upon the remaining ones.

But before I proceed to the particular conſideration of theſe, there are two things, which I would premiſe. The 1ſt is, that as the trumpets did raiſe Antichriſt up, and the vials muſt pull him down: ſo there is a wonderful relation that the laſt bear to the former, eſpecially the four firſt ones. For the firſt trumpet and firſt vial bring judgments on the earth, the ſecond trumpet and vial on the ſea, the third trumpet and vial on the rivers, and the fourth trumpet and vial on the Sun. The 2d is this; that ſeeing the vials do ſuppoſe a ſtruggle and war between the popiſh and reformed

parties: every vial is to be looked upon, as the event and concluſion of ſome new periodical attack of that firſt party upon this other; the iſſue of which proves at length favourable to the latter againſt the former. Which ſeeing it is the moſt noble and remarkable part of the period that the Vial relates to, is therefore that which denominates the period itſelf; even as the conqueſt of Pompey by Cæſar, and of Antony by Auguſtus, ſuppoſe their wars before, and give the denomination to their governments. Theſe things being premiſed, I now proceed.

1. Vial. The firſt Vial, which fell upon the earth, to the tormenting of the ſubjects of the Beaſt, chap. xvi. 2. doth denote God's judgments upon the foundations of the papal power; the earth being that on which we walk and build our houſes, and out of whoſe womb we are maintained. So that by this I underſtand the popiſh clergy and the papal dominions and revenues, as they are upheld by them. This therefore began with the reformation, and continued until the time that the popiſh factors and trumpery were thrown out of as many countries of Europe as embraced the reformation. And we may eaſily conceive what a mortification this was to that party, when the pretended ſanctity of their prieſts, monks and nuns, was found to be mere cheat, and their miracles nothing elſe but lies or legerdemain; and when their tales of Purgatory were expoſed to public contempt, and their pardons and indulgences would ſell no longer; and conſequently when the pope, and his red-hatted and mitred officers ſaw themſelves driven out of ſo great a part of their dominions, their ſeminaries for breeding their motly ſoldiers of all denominations and orders pulled down, and ſo much of their yearly re-

revenues loſt. Whence they are ſaid to fall under a noiſom and grievous ULCER, or ſore; being this way pained and vexed inwardly, and rendered contemptible to the whole world, that looked upon them as no better than vermin, and the plagues of mankind. So that this vial began with the riſe of Zuinglius and Luther and the other reformers, in the year 1516, and 1517, and continued to the year 1566, i. e. about forty years: for by that time all the reformed churches were ſettled, and had publiſhed their creeds and confeſſions againſt Rome, in oppoſition to the determinations of the popiſh council of Trent, publiſhed An. 1563. and the creed of Pope Pius the 4th, which added 12 Antichriſtian articles to the 12 primitive Chriſtian ones, which was put out, A. C. 1564.

The 2d vial, ver. 3. muſt therefore begin where the other ended, as to the period of time that commences from thence. Now I find that in the year 1566, the wars between the king of Spain, and the ſtates of the Netherlands began, when the latter got the nickname of Geuſe. And though the Spainards were often victorious at firſt, yet they were at length forced to declare them free ſtates. It was then that the ſea became blood to the Romaniſts, their votaries being miſerably defeated in their expectations. For after their cruelties under the duke of Alva in the low countries, and their maſſacres of the Proteſtants in France, and other places, the ſcene was changed very quickly. So that A. C. 1588. the Spainards loſt their vaſt Armado, and did ever after decline in their power. And the duke of Guiſe, the inveterate enemy of the Proteſtants, was killed the ſame year. And A. C. 1598. died Philip the 2d of Spain, being eaten up of lice: the edict of Nants being given

out the ſame year in France in favour of the Proteſtants. So that as the reformed intereſt was in peace every where, and conquered in Holland and England; the Popiſh party on the other hand ſaw Spain, the late terror of the Proteſtants, brought to a languiſhing condition, and all their allies weary of wars and perſecutions. And as in the year 1609, the truce was made between the Spainards and the Dutch; ſo the war, tho' renewed and carried on afterwards, became languid and faint, ſo as hardly to be felt or minded by either party, eſpecially the Dutch, who were for the moſt victorious and ſucceſsful. So that, as the period of this vial began An. 1566, ſo we may reckon it continued about fifty years, viz. to the year 1617; ſeeing we ſhall find that the third vial did begin then. For,

3 Vial

The 3d vial, ver. 4, 5, 6, 7. was poured out upon the rivers and fountains of water, or thoſe territories of the papacy which were as neceſſary to it as rivers and fountains are to a country, being as it were, the former vial continued, as to the kind of the plague. For as the former deſtroyed the living creatures or living ſouls that were in or upon the ſea, viz. the Spainards, the great mariners of the world at that time, as to their marine power; who after the year 1588, loſt their former ſovereignty of the ſeas, to the Engliſh and Dutch: ſo this latter plague makes it difficult for the Popiſh party to ſubſiſt and keep their ground even in the inland country and ſeveral dominions of Germany, and the neighbouring places. For in the year 1617, Ferdinand being forced upon the Bohemians by the Emperor Matthias, and crowned king; the foundation of new quarrels was laid this way. For a little while after another moſt bloody religious war enſued, which ſhook

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all the empire, and frightned Europe. And though the Proteſtants loſt Bohemia, the palatinate in part, and were driven out of Moravia, Auſtria and Sileſia at this time, and were not only perſecuted in many places, but like to be extirpated and rooted out univerſally: yet tide turned all on a ſudden. For after the emperor had ruled Germany with a veteran army, for a conſiderable time; Guſtavus Adolphus enters Germany in the year 1630, and conquers every-where. And though he was killed about two years after, yet his army continued victorious; until at length all things were accomodated at the peace of Munſter, A. C. 1648, with which therefore the period of the 3d Vial muſt be ſuppoſed to end, which conſiſts of 31 Years. Now as this began with perſecutions againſt, and cruelties upon the Proteſtants: So at length the angel of the waters is heard to give thanks for making the Papiſts drink of their own blood at laſt. Which ſong of praiſe another angel falls in with, and ſays Amen to. All which ſeems to denote the joy both of the Proteſtant ſtate and church upon the ſucceſs of the Swediſh arms againſt the emperor.

The 4th Vial comes now to be conſidered. And as this is poured out upon the ſun of the papal kingdom, ver. 8. ſo the effect of it is men's being ſcorched or burned with fire, which yet does not make them to turn to God, but blaſpheme his name the more, as we may ſee, ver. 9. Now as this Vial muſt begin where the other ends, viz. at or a little after the year 1648: So I cannot ſee but it muſt denote the wars that followed the peace of Munſter, with other incidental occurences. Now we find that the French hoſtilities and wars in Flanders began about this time. And though this fire

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ſeemed to be quenched by the Pyrenean peace, about ten years after that of Munſter, yet this proved rather fuel to the flame, which broke out with more violence than before, by the ſeizure of Lorain, the new conqueſts of the French in Burgundy and Flanders, and the wars upon Germany, and invaſion on the Low Countries. To which we may add the French king's quarrel with ſeveral Popes, about the reſtitution of Caſtro, the rights of the Duke of Modena, the affair of Corſi, and about the Regale and the Franchiſes. Now, ſeeing the bombarding of towns and cities was chiefly made uſe of in theſe later wars, we may ſee how properly the ſcorching or burning men from above (as if the Sun had ſent down fire and heat from his own body), is made uſe of to characteriſe the time of this Vial. But the chief thing to be taken notice of here, is, that the Sun and other luminaries of heaven, are the emblem of princes and kingdoms, as we took notice before. Therefore, the pouring out of this Vial on the Sun muſt denote the humiliation of ſome eminent potentates of the Romiſh intereſt, whoſe influences and countenance cheriſh and ſupport the Papal cauſe. And theſe, therefore, muſt be principally underſtood of the houſes of Auſtria and Bourbon, though not excluſively of other Popiſh princes. Now, it is not unuſual with God to make his enemies cruſh and weaken one-another. And thus, I ſuppoſe, this Vial is to be underſtood, when it is ſaid, that upon the pouring of it out on the Sun, power was given to him (i. e. the ſun, as moſt underſtand the words from the connexion) to ſcorch men with fire. And this is plain, in what of the Vial is fulfilled, and will be, perhaps, more ſo afterwards. As, therefore, France was made uſe of, in the inſtances given, to vex and ſcorch the Auſtrian family, in both

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branches of it: So, afterwards, was he himſelf tormented, when he ſaw himſelf forced to leave Holland, which he was ſo near ſurpriſing, An. 1672. and, eſpecially, when he was forced to reſign all his conqueſts in Flanders, by the late peace of Reyſwick. It is true, he ſeems now to have got more glory than ever, by the acceſſion of his grandſon to the Spaniſh monarchy: But then this is by an eclipſe upon the Auſtrian family, which is expired in the firſt branch of it. And who knows but this advancement may lay the foundation of the ruin or decay of the French power, by exhauſting that kingdom, both as to men and money, in defence of a weak monarchy? In the mean time, we ſee this Vial has already taken place, in darkning the glory of King James (whom the Papiſts expected new conqueſts from) by the hand of King William; by whom alſo God put a ſtop to the career of the French monarch in his conqueſts in Flanders, and on the Rhine. And, we ſee it further poured out, in the eclipſe of the Auſtrian family, by the loſs of Spain, and its dependent principalities, as alſo in defeating the wicked deſigns of the three confederate monarchs, of Poland, Denmark, and Ruſſia.

And now, ſeeing I have marked out the time we are in at preſent, it is time alſo to put a ſtop to our Apocalyptical thoughts; ſeeing no man can pretend, upon any juſt grounds, to calculate future times. However, ſeeing I have come ſo far, I ſhall adventure to preſent you further with ſome conjectural thoughts on this head; for I am far from the preſumption of ſome men, to give them any higher character.

Now,

Now, my conjectures ſhall relate to two things, viz. To the remaining part of this Vial, and to the other Vials that follow this.

And, firſt, as to the remaining part of this Vial, I do humbly ſuppoſe that it wiil come to its higheſt pitch about An. 1717. and that it will run out about the year 1794. The reaſons for the firſt conjecture are two. The firſt is, becauſe I find that the papal kingdom got a conſiderable acceſſion to its power, upon the Roman weſtern empire's being deſtroyed An. 475. to which the Heruli ſucceeded the year following, and the Oſtro-Goths afterward. Now if from this remarkable year we begin the calculation of the 1260 Years, they lead us down to A. C. 1735. which in prophetical account is this year 1717. The 2d is, becauſe (as I have many years ago obſerved) this year leads us down to a new centenary revolution: For is it not obſervable that John Huſs and Jerom of Prague (to run this up no further) were burned An. 1417? After which the true religion in Bohemia, and other places, was more and more obſcured and ſuppreſſed, until that famous year 1517. when Luther aroſe, and gave the reformation a new reſurrection: according to that remarkable prediction of Jerom of Prague, CENTUM ANNIS REVOLUTIS DEO RESPONDETIBUS ET MIHI; which the Bohemians afterwards ſtamped upon their coin as their motto. From which year the reformed intereſt did ſtill increaſe (whatever particular ſtops and troubles it met with) till the year 1617; about which time the German and Bohemian wars began to break out. And it is but too obvious, what an ebb hath followed ſince that time to this, notwithſtanding the pouring out of the ſecond, third, and fourth Vials. So that there is ground to hope, that

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about the beginning of another ſuch century, things may again alter for the better: For I cannot but hope that ſome new mortification of the chief ſupporters of Antichriſt will then happen; and, perhaps, the French monarchy may begin to be conſiderably humbled about that time: that whereas the preſent French king takes the Sun for his emblem, and this for his motto, NEC PLURIBUS IMPAR, he may, at length, or rather his ſucceſſors, and the monarchy itſelf (at leaſt before the year 1794), be forced to acknowledge, that (in reſpect to neighbouring potentates) he is even SINGULIS IMPAR.

But, as to the expiration of this Vial, I do fear it will not be until the year 1794. The reaſon of which conjecture is this, that I find the Pope got a new foundation of exaltation, when Juſtinian, upon his conqueſt of Italy, left it, in a great meaſure, to the Pope's management, being willing to eclipſe his own authority, to advance that of this haughty prelate. Now, this being in the year 552, this, by the addition of the 1260 years, reaches down to the year 1811; which, according to prophetical account, is the year 1794. And then, I do ſuppoſe, the fourth Vial will end, and the fifth commence, by a new mortification of the Papacy, after this Vial has laſted 148 years: which, indeed, is long, in compariſon with the former Vials; but, if it be conſidered in relation to the fourth, fifth and ſixth Trumpets, it is but ſhort, ſeeing the fourth laſted 190 years, the fifth 302, and the ſixth 393.

And now, my friends, I may be well excuſed, if I venture no further, in giving you any more conjectural thoughts upon this preſent period of time. But, ſeeing I pretend to give my ſpeculations, of what is future,

no higher character than gueſſes, I ſhall ſtill venture to add ſomething to what I have already ſaid.— Therefore be pleaſed, firſt, to call to mind what I premiſed to the conſideration of the ſeven Vials, as the ſecond preliminary, viz. That ſeeing the Vials do (all of them) ſuppoſe a ſtruggle or war between the popiſh and reformed parties: Every Vial is to be looked upon as the event and concluſion of ſome new periodical attack of that firſt party upon this other; the iſſue of which, proves, at length, favourable to the later againſt the former. For, if this be duly conſidered, it will let us ſee, that great declining of the Proteſtant intereſt, for ſome time, and great and formidable advances, and new degrees of increaſe in the Romiſh party, are very conſiſtent with the ſtate of both theſe oppoſite intereſts, under the Vials. For, as Rome Pagan was gradually ruined under the Seals, under many of which it ſeemed to increaſe to outward obſervation, and to become more rampant than before, when yet it was indeed declining: So muſt we ſuppoſe it will be with Rome Papal. For monarchies, as they riſe gradually and inſenſibly, ſo do they wear out likewiſe. And, therefore, we muſt not entertain ſuch chimerical notions of the fall of the Papacy, as if it were to be accompliſhed ſpeedily or miraculouſly, as many have done. For, as it roſe inſenſibly, and ſtep by ſtep, ſo it muſt fall in like manner. But to illuſtrate this further, as to what of the Vials is yet unfulfilled, by what is paſt; let us look back on the two preceding Vials. The ſecond Vial, therefore, began with a formidable attack upon the Proteſtants, by the growth of the Auſtrian family, from the year 1566, to the year 1588; during all which time, the Vial ſeemed rather to be poured out on the Proteſtants than Papiſts. But, as there muſt be a war,

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to denote a victory; ſo it was in this caſe. So that the Vial was ſeen at laſt, in its effects, upon the Auſtrian party, from An. 1588 to 1598; and, afterwards, to 1617. For it is with the church, as it is with particular Chriſtians, who are often ſorely buffeted by Satan, and ſometimes brought even to extremities by temptations; but do ever carry the victory at laſt. Who would have believed that the Chriſtian church was about to triumph over the Roman Pagan empire, when the dreadful perſecution under Dioclefian, and his collegiate emperors, was at its higheſt pitch? But the darkeſt time of the night, uſhers in the dawning of the church's day, in the uſual way of God's providence over the ſame. And this is very conſpicuouſly to be obſerved, in the period of the third Vial. Who would have thought, that the loſs of Bohemia, and the emperor Ferdinand's ruling all Germany with a formidable army, were like to iſſue in the victories of the Swediſh arms, and the future ſecurity of the Proteſtant intereſt through the empire and elſewhere? So that we muſt not wonder, if, for ſixteen years, the Houſe of Bourbon be raiſed up to be a further terror and ſcourge to the world, and to Proteſtant nations particularly. And, as a confirmation of this conjecture, let it be conſidered, in the ſecond place (beſides what I hinted before on this head), that it is ſomething very extraordinary, and peculiar, in ſome ſenſe, to this Vial, That the Sun, upon which it is poured out, ſhould yet be made the executor of the judgment of it on others, at the ſame time that he is tormented with it himſelf. So that whoſoever is denoted by the Sun here (as I ſuppoſe the Houſe of Bourbon principally is), is made uſe of, as the devil is, both to torment others, and to be tormented himſelf in ſo doing. And, if the king of France, therefore, be denoted by

this principally, I fear he is yet to be made uſe of, in the hand of God, as Nebuchadnezzar was, of old, againſt the Jews, viz. as a further ſevere ſcourge to the Proteſtant churches every-where. And, beſides this characteriſtical mark, which ſeems to forebode his further exaltation and our humiliation; there is yet a third thing, that I cannot but think upon with dread and trembling of heart, viz. that it is further ſaid, That while this Sun of the Popiſh world is running his fatal and dreadful career, and ſcorching men with fire, they are ſo far from being bettered by theſe judgments, that they go on more and more to blaſpheme the name of God, who has power over theſe plagues. And, while this continues to be the ſtate of the Proteſtant world, and, while Atheiſm, Deiſm, Socinianiſm, irreligion, profaneneſs, ſcepticiſm, formality, hatred of godlineſs, and a bitter perſecuting ſpirit, continue and increaſe among us; what can we expect but new and deſolating judgments? For, while we continue to walk thus contrary to God, we cannot but expect that he ſhould walk contrary to us alſo. It is in vain for us to boaſt of our privileges, or plead exemption from judgments on this account. For, where there is no national reformation and repentance, national ſins are like to pull down miſeries upon us, ſo much the ſooner and more certainly, that we have been ſo ſingularly and peculiarly privileged. For we may in this caſe expect that God will ſay to us, as to the Iſraelites of old, "You have I ſpecially known and choſen above all the families or nations of the earth, therefore will I puniſh you more certainly and more ſeverely than any other kingdom or nation *." And therefore if we go on in ſin, as we have hitherto done, let us take heed to ourſelves, leſt vengeance be near. I pray God I may be miſtaken in

* Amos iii. 2.

in my fears. But I am afraid I have but too juſt reaſon to turn prophet here, by applying to ourſelves, what Peter ſaid to thoſe of his time: "The time is come, that judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God," 1 Pet. iv. 17. Tho' I do alſo conclude with him, that if it begin at us, dreadful will be the end of our enemies at laſt. And if the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly appear? Wherefore, if we be called to ſuffer for our holy religion, let us do ſo according to the will of God, committing the keeping of our ſouls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator. And I wiſh my conjecture be not found to be more than a mere gueſs, that for about 16 years our Romiſh enemies may prevail more and more. Though how far theſe may be lengthened out or ſhortened, we can only conjecturally judge of, from the future carriage of the reformed churches, under the circumſtances they may be ſtated afterwards. If any ſay, that theſe are melancholy conjectures: I muſt tell them I cannot help the matter; for I muſt follow the threed of the text, and the aſpect of the times. If they aſk, But when will the tide turn for the Proteſtant church? I anſwer, When they turn more univerſally to God, and no ſooner. But if they enquire further, Whether the Sun of the Popiſh kingdom is not to be eclipſed himſelf at length? I muſt poſitively aſſert he will; elſe this Vial were not a judgment upon him and the Romiſh party. But if yet the queſtion be, When this is to fall out, and how? I muſt tell you, that I have nothing further to add to what I have ſaid, as to the time. But as to the manner, how this is to be done, our text does lay a foundation of ſome more diſtinct thoughts. Therefore, in the fourth and laſt place, we may juſtly ſuppoſe, that the French monarchy, after it has ſcorched others, will itſelf conſume

ſume by doing ſo; its fire, and that which is the fuel that maintains it, waſting inſenſibly, till it be exhauſted at laſt towards the end of this century, as the Spaniſh monarchy did before, towards the end of the ſixteenth age. And if we do now heartily and unanimouſly enter upon a war againſt France, with the aſſiſtance of allies, and be but vigorous and faithful in the proſecution of it, ſecuring the ſource of money and treaſure in the heart of America, and bringing the war into the bowels of a nation, where a young monarch is hardly eſtabliſhed; I ſay, if we do this, without loſing our opportunities, our peace and ſecurity may yet be lengthened out. Whereas if we ſuffer ourſelves to be lulled aſleep at this time, we may have cauſe to lament our not having improved our ſeaſon. But ſeeing I am not called to give my advice one way or other, I ſhall leave the determination of ſuch weighty matters to the wiſdom of national councils. However as my duty is to pray for direction unto theſe; ſo I earneſtly wiſh, that there may be nothing to ſtop the regular and ſecure procedure of public matters in this critical juncture; upon the wiſe improvement of which, our future ſtability and peace does ſo much depend. And now, after all this, I deſire ye may conſult a book I formerly publiſhed, called, "The "Rod, or the Sword; or the preſent Dilemma of theſe "Nations." For ye will there ſee, more fully, my thoughts of our times, and how the moral reaſons given there, taken from the aſpect of our age, though preached in 1692, and publiſhed the year following, do exactly agree with my preſently apocalyptical thoughts.

One thing only I ſhall further take notice of here, upon the occaſion of the king of Spain's death; that God ſeems to mark out great things ſometimes by very

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minute ones, ſuch as names, E. G. as the Spaniſh monarchy began with Charles the fifth, (as to the Auſtrian family) ſo it has now expired in one of the ſame name: which I the rather obſerve, becauſe of many inſtances of the ſame kind. Of which I the rather obſerve, becauſe of many inſtances of the ſame kind. Of which number take theſe following: Darius the Mede, as Daniel calls him (though Xenophon calls him Cyaxares) the uncle of Cyrus, was the firſt Medo Perſian monarch, after the deſtruction of the Babylonian; and Darius Codomannus was the laſt. Ptolemeus Lagi began the Egyptian kingdom after Alexander's death, and Ptolemeus Dionyſius was the laſt of that race. Auguſtus fixed the Roman-empire, and it ended in Auguſtulus. The Eaſtern Roman empire was erected by Conſtantine the Great, and expired with Conſtantine Paleologus. The Scots race came into England in a James, and has gone out again in another of that name. And whether William, the third king of England of that name, as well as the third William, prince of Orange, be likely to be the laſt both theſe ways, is left to future time to unriddle. Only I pray that God may long preſerve him, and us by him: And may he live to be a further ſcourge to France, and a terror to Romaniſts.

But, ſecondly, to proceed with my other conjectures, relating to the remaining Vials, I do further ſuppoſe that,

The fifth Vial, ver. 10, 11. which is to be poured out on the ſeat of the Beaſt, or the dominions that more immediately belong to, and depend upon the Roman See; that, I ſay, this judgment will probably begin about the year 1794, and expire about A. C. 1848. So that the

5 Vial from Page 61 XXX

the duration of it, upon this ſuppoſition, will be for the ſpace of 54 years. For, I do ſuppoſe, that ſeeing the Pope received the title of ſupreme biſhop no ſooner than An. 606; he cannot be ſuppoſed to have any Vial poured upon his ſeat immediately (ſo as to ruin his authority ſo ſignally as this judgment muſt be ſuppoſed to do), until the year 1848, which is the date of the 1260 years, in prophetical account, when they are reckoned from An. 606. But yet we are not to imagine that this Vial will totally deſtroy the Papacy (though it will exceedingly weaken it); for we find this ſtill in being and alive, when the next Vial is poured out.

The ſixth Vial, ver. 12, &c. will be poured out upon the Mahometan Antichriſt, as the former on the Papacy. And ſeeing the ſixth Trumpet brought the Turks from beyond Euphrates, from croſſing which river they date their riſe: This ſixth Vial dries up their waves, and exhauſts their power, as the means and way to prepare and diſpoſe the Eaſtern kings and kingdoms to renounce their Heatheniſh and Mahometan errors, in order to their receiving and embracing Chriſtianity. For, I think, this is the native import of the text; and not that the Jews are to be underſtood under this denomination of the kings of the Eaſt; which is ſuch an odd ſtraining of it, to ſerve a turn, as I cannot admit of. Now, ſeeing this Vial is to deſtroy the Turks, we hear of three unclean ſpirits like frogs or toads, that were ſent out by Satan, and the remains of the Polity and Church of Rome, called the Beaſt and the falſe Prophet, in order to inſinuate upon the Eaſtern nations, upon their deſerting Mahometiſm, to fall in with their idolatrous and ſpurious Chriſtianity, rather than with the true reformed doctrine. And theſe meſſengers ſhall be

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ſo ſucceſsful, as to draw theſe Eaſtern kings and their ſubjects, and, with them, the greateſt part of mankind, to take part with them. So that, by the aſſiſtance of theſe, their agents and miſſionaries, they ſhall engage the whole world, in ſome manner, to join with them, in rooting out the ſaints. (And here, in a parentheſis, Chriſt gives a watch-word to his ſervants, to be upon their guard in this hour of trial, ver. 15.) But, when the Pope has got himſelf at the head of this vaſt army, and has brought them to the place of battle, called, Armageddon (i. e. the place where there will be a moſt diabolical, cunning and powerful conſpiracy againſt Chriſt's followers); then, immediately, doth the ſeventh Angel pour out his Vial, to their ruin and deſtruction.

The ſeventh Vial, therefore, being poured out on the air, ver. 17. brings down thunder, lightning, hail, and ſtorms; which, together with a terrible earthquake, deſtroys all the Antichriſtian nations, and particularly Rome, or myſtical Babylon. And as Chriſt concluded his ſufferings on the croſs with this voice, 'It is finiſhed,' ſo the church's ſufferings are concluded with a voice out of the temple of heaven, and from the throne of God and Chriſt there, ſaying, 'It is done.' And, therefore, with this doth the bleſſed millennium of Chriſt's ſpiritual reign on earth begin; of which, and what may be ſuppoſed to follow, we took ſome notice above.

Now, ſeeing theſe two Vials are, as it were, one continued; the firſt running into the ſecond, and the ſecond compleating the firſt; the one giving us an account of the Beaſt's preparations for warring againſt the ſaints, and the other ſhewing the event of the whole: There is no need to give you any conjectures about

the concluſion of the ſixth Vial, or the beginning of the laſt; only you may obſerve, that the firſt of theſe will probably take up moſt of the time between the year 1848, and the year 2000; becauſe ſuch long meſſages and intrigues (beſides the time ſpent before, in deſtroying the Turkiſh empire), and preparations for ſo univerſal a war, muſt needs take up a great many years: whereas our bleſſed Lord ſeems to tell us, that the deſtruction of all thoſe his enemies, will be accompliſhed ſpeedily, and in a little time, in compariſon of the other Vial. Suppoſing then that the Turkiſh monarchy ſhould be totally deſtroyed between 1848, and 1900, we may juſtly aſſign 70 or 80 years longer to the end of the ſixth Seal, and but 20 or 30, at moſt, to the laſt. Now, how great and remarkable this laſt deſtruction of the Papal Antichriſt will be, we may gueſs by that repreſentation of it, chap. xiv. 19, 20. where it is ſet forth under the emblem and character of the great wine-preſs of the wrath of God (which can refer to nothing properly but the event of the ſeventh Vial, as I might ſhew at large, had I time). Now, this wine-preſs is ſaid to be trodden without the city (viz. of Jeruſalem, or the church, ſeeing this is called the City, in Scripture-ſtile, as Rome is called the Great City), in Armageddon, Rev. xvi. 16. which may bear alluſion to the Valley of Deciſion, Joel iii. 2. 12. 14. However, the greatneſs of this ſlaughter appears in this, that the blood is repreſented to flow in ſuch a current as to reach even to the horſe-bridles, viz. of the ſervants of God, employed in this execution: for, without doubt, this relates to what we have, chap. xix. 14. which I beſeech you to compare with this place. For ye will find that a large account is given of the fall of Babylon, chap. xviii. and of the triumph of the church, upon her final

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victory over this enemy, chap. xix. 1, &c. And, among other things ſpoken of, relating to the battle and victory obtained at Armageddon, ye have this account of the General and his victorious army, ver. 11, &c. "And I ſaw heaven opened; and, behold, a white horſe, and he that ſat on him was called Faithful and True,—and he was clothed with a veſture dipt in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horſes. And he treaded the wine-preſs of the fierceneſs and wrath of God.—And I ſaw the Beaſt and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together, to fight with him that ſat on the horſe, and againſt his army. And the Beaſt and the falſe Prophet, were taken,—and both were caſt alive into a lake of fire burning with brimſtone. And the remnant were ſlain with the ſword of him that ſat upon the horſe, which ſword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their fleſh." And now to return to the repreſentation of this ſlaughter, by the wine-preſs of blood, chap. xiv. 20. it is further ſaid of it, that it flowed to the heighth of the horſe-bridles, for the ſpace or extent of 1600 furlongs So that Armageddon ſeems to be denoted here, in the extent of it, as the field of battle, which is now turned into a field of blood. Now, what place can we imagine to be ſo properly meant by this as the territory of the See of Rome in Italy, which (as Mr. Joſeph Mede, who firſt made this obſervation, ſays), from the City of Rome to the furthermoſt mouth of the River Po, and the Marſhes of Verona, is extended the ſpace of 200 Italian miles, that is exactly 1600 furlongs; the Italian mile conſiſting of 8 furlongs. Now the Hebrew word Armageddon or Harmageddon may be juſtly derived from חרמגדון, which ſignifies both a malediction

or anathema, and a deſtruction or ſlaughter, and גדון, or more fully גדרון, which ſignifies an army, or THEIR army. So that both the anathema's darted againſt the ſaints by the Romaniſts, and their armies made uſe of againſt them (all which proceeded from Rome Papal), may be here alluded to, in the expiration of both their eccleſiaſtical and temporal intereſt. So that this conjecture upon the name does confirm that other of Mr. Mede, that the Stata Della Chieſa, or the territory and poſſeſſion of Italy belonging to the See of Rome, is the place called Armageddon, where the final deſtruction of Antichriſtianiſm will be.

Papacy begins and end

And now, my friends, I have fulfilled my promiſe to you, in giving you not only a reſolution of the grand apocalyptical queſtion; When the Papacy began, and when we may ſuppoſe it will end: but ſome conſiderable improvement of it, with reſpect to the knowledge not only of times paſt, but that particular period we are now under, together with conjectures (and ſome of them, I am ſure, new and uncommon) about future time. By all which, I hope, I have given the world ſuch a key to unlock all the chambers of the Book of the Revelation, as, I hope, I may venture to ſay (if conſidered and uſed impartially, judiciouſly, and diligently), will be found to give ſome new light to us, in our mental journey through the mazes, and turnings, and dark paſſages thereof. And had I not been ſo confined, as ye may ſee I have been, I might have cleared a great many other dark things in this propheſy. But, ſeeing I could not neglect this opportunity, of preſenting theſe thoughts to the world, as a new-year and new-age's gift at once: I do, therefore, hope ye will the more eaſily excuſe what may ſeem dark or defective

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in this diſcourſe; as conſidering how much I am ſtraitened, not only as to the limits of paper that I muſt keep to, but of time alſo.

Now, ſeeing I have already given you a theoretical improvement of the queſtion I have preſented you with a reſolution of: all that remains is to bring you from ſpeculations and notions to practice; that your thoughts may be ſo ſeaſoned with a ſerious and deep ſenſe of your duty and intereſt, that ye may get advantage both by the peruſal of my preceding apocalyptical meditations, and the following diſcourſes: That after ye have conſidered the duty of improving your time (which, together with ſome other things I am now to treat of,) ye may make application to yourſelves of what I have ſaid concerning God's dwelling with men upon the earth, ſo as ye yourſelves may become temples of the living God; ſeeing God hath promiſed this privilege to all true Chriſtians, ſaying, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people," 2 Cor. vi. 16. And when ye have thus applied to yourſelves the firſt of the following Diſcourſes, I hope ye will not reckon it loſt time to conſider what I have ſaid as to the Miniſterial Work, eſpecially the application, as to that part of it, at leaſt, which does immediately relate to you and all Chriſtians, as well as miniſters; that this way ye may learn to join in with Chriſt's ordinances for the future, with greater ſerioufneſs and in order to further good, than perhaps any of us have yet attained to do. And when ye have improved this way alſo by the peruſal of the ſecond diſcourſe, let me deſire you to read the laſt concluding one, with ſerious meditation, in order to ſee the connexion and deſign of the whole. For tho' it be ſhort, yet it contains much in little, and may be of uſe to

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introduce your minds to ſome further and more diſtinct apprehenſion of our holy religion, as it centers in Jeſus Chriſt. And when ye have thus peruſed and conſidered both this and the following Diſcourſes, I am willing ye think as meanly of both me and them as ye pleaſe, upon condition that ye may this way value the holy Scriptures more. For, as my deſign, in all my performances of this kind, is to dig my materials from the fruitful and rich mines of this divine depoſitum and ſacred treaſure: So I have no other end than to lead you in there alſo, that ye may be more and more enriched with the ſaving knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jeſus. In order to this, therefore,

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Let, me in the ſecond place, ſuggeſt ſomething here, by way of a practical improvement of what I have ſaid above, eſpecially that part of our diſcourſe which I was laſt upon, relating to the apocalyptical times and periods, with the tranſactions of the ſame, in as far as they concern us. And what I have to ſay here, I ſhall propoſe by way of obſervations, which may be of ſome uſe, I hope, both to regulate our thoughts and actions, while we live in this world, in relation to the concerns of the church of God.

The firſt Obſervation is, That it may juſtly be looked upon as an eminent confirmation of the truth of Chriſtianity, that ſo wonderful an account ſhould be given of the tranſactions of the world, ſo long before they came to paſs.

The verity of our holy religion is proved from two things principally, viz. miracles and prophefy: and both theſe arguments have been excellently improved by

by learned men. But yet, as the firſt of theſe was perhaps the principal and moſt convincing topic to thoſe that lived in our Saviour's days: So I look upon the ſecond to be the moſt conſiderable to thoſe that live in after ages. Nay we find that Chriſt himſelf did not lay the foundation of the belief of his miſſion on miracles alone, but ſeemed to build the faith of his diſciples chiefly on the Old-Teſtament propheſies; as he did to the two diſciples going to Emaus, Luke xxiv. 27, &c: And, I ſuppoſe, it is too plain to need any proof, that the apoſtles did ever inſiſt upon the propheſies of the Old-Teſtament, more than either upon Chriſt's miracles or their own, in order thence to demonſtrate that Chriſt was the Meſſias. "For the teſtimony of Jeſus is the ſpirit of propheſy," Rev. xix. 10. i. e. (as I underſtand the words) the ſpirit of propheſy is the great ſtanding evidence and teſtimony of the divinity of Chriſt, and of the verity of his word. And therefore (as the angel argues with John) he only is to be worſhipped, who is truly God, and who inſpires his ſervants with the gift of knowing things to come.

It has therefore been the work of learned men, in all ages, to prove that Chriſt was the true Meſſias, and conſequently that his inſtitution of religion was truly divine; by ſhewing how punctually the Old-Teſtament propheſies were fulfilled in him. But I am much miſtaken, if an impartial conſiderer of the New-Teſtament propheſies may not find ſome things that do almoſt as plainly characteriſe ſeveral later events, as the antient propheſies did the former. And of this, let what I have ſaid of the ſixth and ſeventh Seal, and fifth and ſixth Trumpet, and of the ſlaughter of the witneſſes, be taken as inſtances. Or if this will not be allowed, let

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it be conſidered, that we ſee the full completion of the Old Teſtament propheſies relating to the erection of Chriſtianity, whereas we ſee not the entire fulfilling of the apocalyptical ones. Therefore we muſt make allowance for the different repreſentation of the one and the other of theſe. For they only that ſhall live after the great battle of Armageddon is over, can ſee the exact fulfilling of this propheſy in the deſtruction of Antichriſt, with the ſame advantage they ſee alſo the fulfilling of Daniel's viſions with reſpect to the coming of the Meſſiah and his death. We therefore now have no more advantage, as to time, in explaining and underſtanding this latter event, than the Jews had as to the firſt, who lived in the days of the Maccabees, while Daniel's weeks of years were running out. And I queſtion if they then did underſtand the periods of time they were under, more clearly, if at all ſo diſtinctly, as we do the times that have paſt over the Chriſtian Church, and that part of time we are now under. Therefore I ſay, we have great reaſon to thank God, that ſo much of this book is already made ſo clear to us, as to prove confirming thus far to our faith. For whatever differences have been among the moſt eminent interpreters of this book, as to particular calculations and accomodations of things: Yet they have all of them agreed in the main foundations of the interpretation thereof, which I have built upon (excepting Grotius and Hammond, whoſe hypotheſis has had few followers, and will have fewer), as Dr. Creſſener has irrefragably proved in his book, intitled, "A demonſtration of the firſt principles of the "Proteſtant-applications of the Apocalypſe." So that there are two things almoſt equally ſtrange to me, that the Jews ſhould own the verity of the Old-Teſtament,

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and particularly of Daniel's propheſy, and not ſee that the Meſſias is come; and that the Papiſts ſhould believe the divinity of the New Teſtament, and particularly of the Revelation, and not ſee that their church is Antichriſtian. But while I admire the wilful ſtupidity of both theſe parties; I cannot but admire alſo the wiſdom of God in making uſe of both theſe in his providence to confirm to us the verity of Chriſtianity, in propheſying both of the one and the other ſo long before, and in continuing them to this day as ſtanding monuments of the divinity both of the Old and New Teſtament. But beſides this, there is

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A ſecond obſervation, that may be of great uſe to us this way alſo, viz. That this book repreſents to us, as in a ſmall but exact map, the ſteadineſs and exactneſs of providence, and Chriſt's government of the world.

For here we ſee the various and ſeemingly confuſed events of providence ſo exactly methodized, as to make up one uniform and noble piece: The ſeeming diſcords and jarring ſounds of things, being ſo diſpoſed by infinite wiſdom, as to make up one perfect harmony. Here piety and wickedneſs, Angels and Devils, the Church and Antichriſt, act various and contrary parts: And yet Chriſt makes uſe of all for noble purpoſes, and carries all on for one great end.

And now, as in other reſpects, ſo in this, we may take notice of the perfection of the holy Scripture; that what is wanting in hiſtory, is made up in propheſy, which, in ſome ſenſe, is hiſtory alſo. For, if hiſtory, in the general notion of it, be an account or relation of the actions of men in the world, propheſy is no leſs

a ſpecies of this than that to which the name is moſt commonly appropriated. For, as that is a relation of things paſt, propheſy is an account of things to come. Now, as Daniel makes up the hiatus or defect of the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, ſo the Revelation of John, ſupplies that of the New, by leading us down from Chriſt's firſt to his ſecond coming.

And here let me obſerve, that theſe two books give us the exact plan of a divine hiſtory, which never yet was given: the only eſſay towards ſomething of this kind, that I know of, having been given by a near and dear * friend of mine. For though there have been many eccleſiaſtical as well as civil hiſtories written, yet none of theſe run in the ſtrain of Scripture-hiſtory, where all matters of fact are related, not ſo much in a reference to men as, in relation to God, and his providence, in governing the world.

A third Obſervation is this, That we may now, after what I have ſaid, attain to a diſtinct view of what part of this propheſy is paſt, and what remains yet to be fulfilled.

Of this I ſhall ſay nothing directly at this time, ſeeing the preceding ſcheme I have given of the apocalyptical periods may, I humbly hope, afford you a ſufficient threed to regulate and fix your thoughts and meditations in relation to this ſubject. Only I ſhall hint ſome things to you, that are deducible from what I have already ſaid this way.

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* My father, in his Third Part of the Fulfilling of Scripture, called, Scripture-Truth confirmed and cleared, by ſome eminent appearances of God for his Church, under the New Teſtament.

Therefore, firſt, let me adviſe you not to ſuffer yourſelves to be deluded with the ſpecious or confident pretences of ſome men; when they go about to impoſe not only upon themſelves but upon the world, by their notions relating to the ſudden coming of Chriſt to judge the world, or to the ſpeedy deſtruction of the Papacy. I love to expoſe no man's weakneſſes, and I perfectly abhor the way that of late is become modiſh, to rip up and publiſh perſonal failings. And, therefore, I ſhall neither trample upon the graves of the dead, nor affront the living: as remembring that we do all know in part and propheſy in part only. But, without detracting from others, I do in faithfulneſs and love deſire ye may not ſuffer yourſelves to be impoſed upon by a vain imagination that the end of things is ſo near, as ſome both of old and of late have pretended to foreſee. For, from the ſcheme I have given you, ye may eaſily ſee, that there are many and great events to fall out, before the final fall of Antichriſtianiſm, and more before the conſumption of all things.

And, ſecondly, as I would not have you to ſuffer your hope to carry you too far, ſo neither your fear. For, as the warm imagination of ſome men has repreſented to them the fall of Antichriſt and the day of judgment ſo near, that theſe muſt happen in their times: ſo the melancholy and fear of others, has ſo far wrought upon them, that they have fancied the great ſlaughter of the Witneſſes is yet to come. And of both theſe ſorts of men, this obſervation will be found generally to be true; that thoſe over whoſe reaſon, fancy and imagination has the aſcendent (whether it be an airy or ſprightly, or a dull and melancholy one), have ſtill limited great events to their own time,

and moſt commonly to a very few years. But I am much miſtaken if I have not proved, that the univerſal ſlaughter of the Witneſſes is already paſt: Though, at the ſame time, I do readily grant, that there is juſt ground to fear, that we are near ſome very trying judgments, of ſome years continuance. But I have ſaid enough of this above, and therefore ſhall add no more here.

But, thirdly, ſeeing I have touched but ſlightly upon the millennium, or the thouſand years reign of the ſaints on earth; I ſhall deſire you to think a little further on this, as the greateſt event that is to happen before the end of the world.

I dare not, indeed, expatiate upon this vaſt ſubject; only I ſhall ſuggeſt a few things concerning it. The firſt is, that this is to begin immediately after the total and final deſtruction of Rome Papal, in or about the year 2000: And that, therefore, Chriſt himſelf will have the honour of deſtroying that formidable enemy, by a new and remarkable appearance of himſelf, as I ſaid above. But, ſecondly, we muſt not imagine that this appearance of Chriſt will be a perſonal one, no more than his appearance in the deſtruction of the Jews by Veſpaſian and Titus was ſuch; for, "The heavens muſt retain him, until the great and laſt day of the conſummation or reſtitution of all things *." Thirdly, Yet we muſt have a care of confounding this millenary peaceful ſtate of the church, with the day of judgment: Seeing nothing is more plainly diſtinguiſhed, than theſe are in the 20th chapter of the Revelation; where it is told us, That after the thouſand years are expired, Satan ſhall be again let looſe, and men ſhall apoſtatize almoſt uni-

* Acts iii. 21.

univerſally from Chriſt, and make war againſt the ſaints; and that after the deſtruction of thoſe enemies, the day of judgment ſhall commence. And, therefore, fourthly, we are not to imagine that the millenary reign of the ſaints ſhall be free from all mixture of hypocriſy and wicked men, or from ſin and trouble: Seeing the ſudden and general apoſtacy that follows that period is a demonſtration, that all were not Iſrael that feigned themſelves ~~to be~~ of it, and wanted therefore only an opportunity to ſhake off the church's yoke. Nay, the expiration of that period ſhews, that long peace and proſperity muſt have corrupted the church itſelf; elſe it cannot be conceived to be conſiſtent with the equity and goodneſs of God, to ſuffer her enemies to go ſo near to the total extirpation of his own profeſſing people.

Theſe things I have hinted thus, becauſe I have no time or room to inſiſt upon them as the ſubject does require. But I do the more readily paſs them now, becauſe a * late learned author has materially conſidered them, at leaſt the three laſt of them: wherein he has very much confirmed my Apocalyptical thoughts, which ſeveral years ago I had entertained upon this head.

And the ſame † author has prevented my enquiry concerning the call of the Jews, and their national converſion to Chriſtianity: For, as I took notice before, I could never fall in with the ſtrained interpretation of Rev. xvi. 12. as if by the kings of the eaſt, the Jews were to be underſtood, and that, conſequently, their full con-

* Dr. Whitby's Treatiſe of the Millennium, added to his Paraphraſe and Comment on the Epiſtles.

† The ſame author, ibid. and on the 11th of the Romans, and in the Appendix to the ſame.

converſion was to be under the ſixth Vial. Therefore, after various thoughts upon this head, being ſatisfied that the Jews were to be converted, and that this great event could not be wholly left out in the Revelation, I did at laſt conclude, that this muſt not be (whatever particular converſions of ſome part of them might happen) until the final deſtruction of the Popiſh party; whoſe idolatry, villainies, lies and legends, and bloody temper, is the chief thing that prejudices them againſt Chriſtianity. So that I did at length conclude, that the reſurrection or revival of the ancient Jewiſh church, is is underſtood by the reſurrection of the martyrs, chap. xx. 4. who being thus added to the true reformed Chriſtian church, and making up one body, together with thoſe Gentile believers, in the fulneſs or ripened ſtate of the Gentile church, ſhall be to them as life from the dead. See Rom. xi. 15. 25.

One notion only I crave leave to add to thoſe of the above-cited author on theſe heads, viz. That I look upon the millenary ſtate to be the moſt eminent and illuſtrious time of the Chriſtocraty (I hope none will reject the word, though it be new, ſeeing it is ſo expreſſive of the thing), wherein Chriſt will revive, but in a more ſpiritual and excellent way, the ancient theocraty of the Jews. For, as under Moſes, the judges and kings of Judah, God acted as King of the Jews (or Chriſt rather, in a more peculiar and immediate ſenſe, as I may, perhaps, have an occaſion, afterwards, to prove to the world), ſo I do expect, that after God has delivered his Chriſtian Church from ſpiritual Egypt, and deſtroyed his enemies in the Red Sea of their own blood; he will once more exert his power and authority, and our bleſſed Redeemer will reign as

King

King of his people, not indeed in such a pompous way as among the Jews of old (for John saw no temple in the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 22.), but in a way adapted to the New-Testament dispensation, and more immediately preparative unto, and typical of the state of glory in heaven, after the day of judgment is over.

And now that I am upon this great prophetical event, I cannot forbear to give you a new conjecture upon the last numbers of Daniel. For his 70 Weeks of Years, chap. ix. 24. are already remarkably elapsed in the incarnation and death of our Redeemer. And the number of 2000 days, chap. viii. are plainly to be interpreted of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes his profanation of the sanctuary: For, as it is restricted to that short period, as is plain to any that will attentively consider the words themselves, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. especially if compared with ver. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26. so the Spirit of God, by designing this period by the title of a period of EVENINGS-MORNINGS, i. e. Natural days, does plainly assure us that we are not to interpret these days prophetically for years, as we are allowed to do the 70 Weeks, and other numbers. To return, therefore, to the last numbers of Daniel; there are two distinct periods of time, as I take them to be (though all other interpreters go another way), to be found in his 12th chapter. The first is of a time, times and a half, or three years and a half, ver. 7. i. e. 1290 prophetical days, or years, as Daniel himself has it explained to him, ver. 11. This, therefore, is the same period of time that John borrows from Daniel, and accommodates to the duration of Rome Papal; excepting that there is the difference of 30 days, or years; only that æra of this period in Daniel, is vastly different from

from that of John: For, as to the latter, we have ſeen it already; but as to the former, Daniel fixes it at the ſcattering of the holy people, or the Jewiſh nation, ver. 7. and at the taking away the daily ſacrifice, and the ſetting up of the abomination that maketh deſolate, ver. 11. Now, our Saviour, who was certainly the beſt expoſitor of his own word, explains this abomination that maketh deſolate, and which was to pollute and and ruin the ſanctuary, to be nothing elſe but the idolatrous and deſolating Roman army; as we ſee by comparing Matth. xxiv. 15. with Luke xxi. 20, 21. The epocha, therefore, of the time, times and a half in Daniel, or his 1290 years, muſt be the year 70 from the birth of our Saviour, when Jeruſalem was taken, if we ſhould conſider the beginning of the ſetting up the abomination that maketh deſolate. But ſeeing the æra of this number is not the beginning of the conqueſt of the Jews, but the compleat ſcattering of that nation, or the accompliſhing the ſcattering of the power of the holy people, as the words are, ver. 7. and the full ſetting up of the abomination that maketh deſolate, ver. 11. which was not done till Hadrian's time; who fully conquered the Jews, and built a city near the ruins of Jeruſalem, which he called Ælia, building, at the ſame time, a temple to Jupiter, on the ground where the temple had ſtood, and engraving over the gate of this new city the figure of a Swine, in deriſion of the Jews. Now, this work was finiſhed in or about the year 135. From whence the period of 1290 years leads us down to A. C. 1425. which, in prophetical reckoning, is the year 1407. About which time, the Papal power was at its utmoſt elevation; for, after this time, the Huſſites, Albigenſes, Wickliffites, Waldenſes, Picards, &c. began to fall before the Romaniſts, until

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they were, in a manner, totally extirpated before another century had well nigh run out. Now, this dismal period expires about this time; and, then, there follows the second period of 1335 days or years, ver. 12. which being calculated from the year 1407, terminates An. Dom. 2742, i. e. 2722 of prophetical reckoning: which, therefore, includes the begun downfal of the Papacy under the seven Vials; and the final accomplishment thereof afterwards, together with the greatest part of the millennium; and, consequently, the great conversion of the Jewish nation during that period. And, perhaps, the begun apostacy of Jewish and Gentile Christians (which is to issue in an universal war against the saints, upon the expiration of the millennium), may begin about that year 2722.

And, now, that I have come again upon prophetical numbers, I shall venture to digress a little more still, in giving you some further illustration of these two great periods, from the 14th chapter of the Revelations. Of which take these few hints at this time. In the first place, then, ye have a description of Christ's followers adhering to him, during the reign and rage of Antichrist, from ver. 1. to ver. 5. inclusive: which must therefore reach down from An. 606, or 758 rather, to An. 1517. After which, we have the begun revival of the church of Christ, represented, in the second place, by the testimonies of the three Angels, succeeding one another. The first Angel has a commission to preach the gospel purely to all nations, ver. 6, 7. which must therefore begin with the preaching of Zuinglius and Luther; and does include, I humbly suppose, the periods of the four first Vials. The second Angel follows, ver. 8. and proclaims the fall of Babylon, or the Papacy;

and muſt therefore be ſynchronical with the fifth Vial being poured out upon the ſeat of the Beaſt. The third Angel gives men warning, that they ſhould not join with the Beaſt; and denounceth ſevere judgments againſt them that ſhall be found to do ſo, ver. 10, &c. Which, therefore, relates to the laſt part of the time of the ſixth Vial, when the unclean Spirits go forth to inſinuate into the nations, in order to engage them to make war againſt the ſaints, chap. xvi. 13, 14, 15, 16. Now, after all theſe things, we have, in the third place, a typical or emblematical account of the deliverance of the church, and of the deſtruction of the bloody, perſecuting Antichriſtian party. Therefore, we have, firſt, The emblem of an harveſt; which ſeems immediately to relate to Chriſt's gathering his church into a happy ſtate, ver. 14, 15, 16. And then, ſecondly, We have the repreſentation of the final deſtruction of the Popiſh party, under the emblem of a vintage: wherein the bloody cluſters of the ſeveral Popiſh fraternities and communities are to be bruiſed and ſqueezed to death in the wine-preſs of God's wrath, ver. 17—20. But I have ſpoken already to this great period of time above, which iſſues in the bleſſed millennium; and therefore I ſhall ſay no more to it at this time.

Only there is one thing that falls in my way here, which ought not to be paſſed over in ſilence; and that is, to what period we are to refer the happy ſtate of the New Jeruſalem, chap. xxi. and of the bleſſed River and Tree of life, chap. xxii. For I find interpreters at a mighty loſs this way, whether theſe relate to the millennium or heaven itſelf, after the day of judgment is paſt. And, indeed, there are ſome things that ſeem inconſiſtent with either of theſe ſtates. For what is ſaid

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of the nations flocking into this new ſtate, and walking in the light of it; and of the kings of the earth, that they ſhall bring in their glory and honour to the church, chap. xxi. 24, 25, 26. ſeems not to agree with the notion the Scripture gives us of the ſtate of the glorified in the higher heaven, after the reſurrection; but does exactly ſuit with the peaceful reign of the ſaints, when Jeruſalem, or the church, ſhall be exalted above the nations, who ſhall all run into her. And yet, upon the other hand, there are things alſo that ſeem to be too great, even for the bleſſed millennium, as we have given the notion of it above. Such is the account of the perfection of this ſtate, that it will be exempted from all death, ſorrow, crying and pain, chap. xxi. 4. And yet, as the former expreſſions may be adapted to the ſtate of the church-triumphant in heaven, in a ſpiritual ſenſe: ſo theſe laſt expreſſions may be made to ſuit alſo with the ſtate of the church on earth, during the millennium, in a comparative ſenſe, i. e. if conſidered with reſpect to the preceding afflicted condition of Chriſtians.

Therefore, ſeeing this laſt glorious ſcene of affairs may be interpreted in relation either to the one or other of theſe periods: I conclude that we ought to interpret it of both, viz. of the millennium in a firſt ſenſe, and of the future glory of the church in heaven, in a ſecond and compleat ſenſe. For as I obſerved above, that the ſacred propheſies, particularly that in the 24th chapter of Matthew, and 2d chapter of the 2d Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, are to be interpreted both in a firſt and ſecond or ultimate ſenſe: ſo I do believe, we muſt of neceſſity underſtand the account of the new heavens and new earth, and of the heavenly Jeruſalem in this book. And if this be once ſuppoſed, then it will be

eaſy to adjuſt the ſeemingly different figures uſed by the Holy Spirit, in this place; ſeeing the whole is ſo contrived, that it may correſpond both with the millenary ſtate and the future ſtate of glory; viz. to the firſt as an emblem and type of the later. So that as the deſtruction of the Jewiſh nation and church, is given in ſuch words, Matth. xxiv. as to become this way an emblem of the final deſtruction of the world; ſo, likewiſe, is the millennium ſo painted and deſcribed, Rev. xxi. as to be deſignedly given as a type of the ſtate of the church triumphant in heaven, after the day of judgment is over.

A fourth Obſervation, from what I ſaid before, is this, That our Reformers did not raſhly, but upon juſt grounds, deſert the Church of Rome, as Antichriſtian and apoſtatical.

For, not to inſiſt upon prophetical indications of the Roman Church being indeed the great Antichriſt; there are four things that lay a juſt foundation for all honeſt men's leaving that intereſt; viz. 1. Groſs errors, ſuch as purgatory, human merits and works of ſupererogation, indulgences, tranſubſtantiation, &c. 2. Horrid idolatry, in worſhipping angels, ſaints and canonized perſons, together with images, ſtatues, crucifixes and a conſecrated wafer. 3. The pretended infallibility of the Roman See, in impoſing upon men's conſciences what they pleaſe, and debarring us from reading the Scriptures ourſelves, or making uſe of our own reaſon in the matters of religion. And, 4. The dreadful tyranny of that party, ſeen and felt both in their inhuman cruelties, perſecutions, maſſacres, and diabolical barbarities uſed againſt all thoſe that differ from them.

For

For the proof of all which things, let Chamierus be consulted, together with Heydegerus de Babylone magna, Turretinus de neceſſaria Seceſſione ab Eccleſia Romana; and, beſides innumerable others, Stillingfleet's late pieces againſt the Romaniſts. For my time allows me not now to enlarge upon any of theſe heads.

Only, that I may not leave you without ſome ſpecimen of Popery, I ſhall copy out in Engliſh the Twelve Articles of the Romiſh Faith, additional to the Twelve Chriſtian ones, which are contained in the Apoſtles' Creed, as to the ſum and ſubſtance of them. Theſe twelve additional articles are contained in the famous bull of Pope Pius IV. dated at Rome in the year 1564, in the ides of November, and the fifth year of his pontificate, which is to be found at the end of the printed Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: where, after an enumeration of the primitive articles, beginning with CREDO IN UNUM DEUM, &c. 'I believe in one God,' &c. he proceeds to charge all men that would be ſaved, to own and ſwear unto the following articles alſo; anathematizing all that do not ſo. Theſe begin thus; APOSTOLICAS ET ECCLESIASTICAS TRADITIONES, &c. which take in Engliſh thus:

I. I do alſo (i. e. together with the articles of the Apoſtles' Creed) moſt firmly admit and embrace the Apoſtolical and Eccleſiaſtical Traditions, and all other obſervations and conſtitutions of the ſame (i. e. the Roman) Church.

II. I do admit the ſacred Scriptures in the ſame ſenſe that holy mother church doth, whoſe buſineſs it is to judge of the true ſenſe and interpretation of them; which

which I will receive and interpret according to the unanimous conſent of the fathers.

III. I do profeſs and believe, that there are Seven Sacraments of the new law, truly and properly ſo called, inſtituted by Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord, and neceſſary to the ſalvation of mankind, though not all of them to every perſon. Theſe are Baptiſm, Confirmation, Euchariſt, Penance, Extream Unction, Orders, and Marriage, which do all of them confer grace. And I do believe, that of theſe, Baptiſm, Confirmation and Orders, may not be repeated without ſacrilege. I do alſo receive and admit the received and approved Rites of the Catholic (i. e. Roman) Church, in her ſolemn adminiſtration of the above-ſaid Sacraments.

IV. I do receive all and every thing that hath been defined and declared by the holy Council of Trent, concerning Original Sin and Juſtification.

V. I do profeſs, that in the Maſs there is offered to God a true, proper and propitiatory ſacrifice for the quick and the dead: And that, in the moſt holy Sacrament of the Euchariſt, there is truly, really, and ſubſtantially, the Body and Blood, together with the Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and that there is a converſion made of the whole ſubſtance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole ſubſtance of the wine into the Blood; which converſion the Catholic Church calls Tranſubſtantiation.

VI. I confeſs, that under one kind only, whole and entire Chriſt, and a true Sacrament, is taken and received.

VII. I

VII. I do firmly believe that there is a Purgatory, and that the ſouls kept priſoners there, do receive help by the ſuffrages of the faithful.

VIII. I do likewiſe believe that the ſaints reigning with Chriſt are to be worſhipped and prayed unto; and that they do offer prayers unto God for us; and that their relics are to be had in veneration.

IX. I do moſt firmly aſſert, that the Images of Chriſt, of the bleſſed Virgin, the mother of God, and of other ſaints, ought to be had and retained; and that due honour and veneration ought to be given to them.

X. I do affirm, that the power of Indulgences was left by Chriſt in the church; and that the uſe of them is very beneficial to Chriſtian people.

XI. I do acknowledge the holy Catholic and Apoſtolic Roman Church, to be the mother and miſtreſs of all churches: And I do promiſe and ſwear true obedience to the Biſhop of Rome, the ſucceſſor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apoſtles, and Vicar of Jeſus Chriſt.

XII. I do undoubtedly receive and profeſs all other things which have been delivered, defined, and declared by the ſacred Canons and Oecumenical Councils, and, eſpecially, by the holy Synod of Trent; and all things contrary thereunto, and all hereſies condemned, rejected and anathematized by the Church, I do likewiſe condemn, reject and anathematize.

Lo! here, my friends, ye have a fair proſpect of Popery, without any miſrepreſentation, or ſo much

as comment: For these are the words of the Creed itself, which all Papists are obliged to believe and profess, in order to salvation; and which all those who enter into religious orders do solemnly swear unto. And, therefore, it is plain that these things are not looked upon by the Church of Rome, as disputable opinions, but as necessary articles of faith: And, therefore, let the author of the Case of the Regale and Pontificate, see how he can make good the last concluding words of his book, which are these: CONCORS ROMANÆ ET REFORMATÆ ECCLESIÆ FIDES, &c. i.e. The Faith of the Roman and Reformed Church doth agree, or is the same, &c. For if these things be so slight and trivial to him, that he can (as the Popish Gallican Church doth) swallow and digest all, excepting the 11th Article: he must pardon others, if they continue in the faith of the Reformed Church, as that which is opposite to the Roman Creed, in so many momentous particulars.

Nay, let me add one thing further here, as a necessary consectary or inference from what I have said, in relation to this consideration we are still upon: That, as our Reformers did justly separate from the Romish Church: So we have just ground also to continue separated from that Antichristian party.

Let others, under pretence of a dread of what they call schism, run back into Antichristian errors and heresies. Let them, if they are so disposed, forsake pure Christianity, that they may promote the priests' power, and adorn their altars with gold and jewels. And let them, in order to inslave men's consciences and bodies both, sound a retreat to Babylon again. We, I hope, know our duty better, than to run the risk of damning

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our ſouls, by becoming runnegado's to that bloody and wicked party, againſt whoſe abominations ſo many thouſands of our anceſtors witneſſed, under racks and torments, and at the ſtake in Smithfield and elſewhere. They believed, that what they did and ſuffered, was in obedience to the call of God, ſaying, Come out from the apoſtate Romiſh Church, my people, that ye be not partakers of her ſins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her ſins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities*. And God forbid that any temptation ſhould bring any of us back again to that ſink of all impurities and errors, after we have enjoyed the ſun-ſhine of the goſpel, in its purity and power, ſo long. Therefore, ſeeing we know what intereſt we are to keep to, let us be faithful to it, by doing all we can for its ſecurity, eſtabliſhment and honour. And, if God call us to ſuffer for it, let us act as the former heroes of the reformation have done before us, that Chriſt may be glorified and the church edified by us, whether it be by doing or ſuffering, by life or by death.

The fifth and laſt Obſervation that I ſhall propoſe to your thoughts, as the concluſion of all I have ſaid, is this, That though we are not to live to ſee the great and final deſtruction of the Papacy, the bleſſed millennium, or Chriſt's laſt coming to judge the world: Yet, ſeeing death is the equivalent of all theſe to us, if we be ſo happy as to get into Paradiſe; we ought, therefore, accordingly, to ſpend and improve our time, that we may partake of the future glory when we go hence.

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I ſay, death is the equivalent of all theſe things to us, if we be ſo happy as to get into Paradiſe. For then

* Rev. xviii. 4, 5.

we ſhall get the conqueſt over all Antichriſtian enemies, and be with Chriſt in a better ſtate than any earthly millenium can be ſuppoſed to be, waiting until He come to judge the world, and till we appear alſo with him in glory, having reaſſumed our then glorious bodies.

Improve your time, therefore, and all the opportunities and advantages of it, with your utmoſt diligence and ſerioufneſs, as remembering that ye are dying and accountable creatures, and that your time is given you for this very end, that ye may prepare for a better world.

And now that we ſee the beginning not only of a new year, but of a new age, I muſt give a further vent to my zeal and concern for your ſouls' good, upon this great and practical head, viz. The improvement of time, with reſpect to the upper world; that when I am gone, I may, by what I have ſaid, and am about to ſay, continue to ſpeak ſtill to thoſe that ſhall ſurvive me, and even (if this Diſcourſe laſt ſo long) to ſucceeding generations alſo. And I ſuppoſe ye will the more readily bear with me in this, when ye remember with what unanimity and importunity ye deſired me to print a Sermon on this head, which I preached on New-year's-Day, 1699, from Pſal. xc. 12. For, ſeeing I was prevented in yielding to your deſire then, I ſhall lay hold on this opportunity to make amends, in ſome meaſure at leaſt, for that ſeeming neglect, by preſenting you with ſome uſeful hints on this ſubject.

And here, as I begin to ſpeak upon this head, the ſtory of Xerxes comes to my remembrance; who, when

when he ſaw his vaſt army of a thouſand thouſand men march by (with whom he expected to have ſwallowed up the poor Grecians), is reported to have wept, upon this thought, that before a hundred years ſhould run out, none of all that multitude would be alive: little imagining, that before the end of that very year, he was to ſee the deſtruction of almoſt all of them, and draw his laſt breath himſelf alſo. For, methinks, it is a ſerious and weighty thing to think, that before the end of this century, all thoſe that now make a figure in the world, will have finiſhed their courſe, and be gathered into heaven or hell; new actors coming upon the ſtage, in their ſtead. And yet, while I lengthen out my meditation to the end of a century, I find juſt reaſon to contract my thoughts, and ſuppoſe I ſee both you and all others, that croud our ſtreets and places of worſhip, or fill remoter iſlands and continents, gradually dropping into eternity, ſome this year, ſome the next, and ſo on.

But to proceed to the conſideration of the ſubject in hand; I ſuppoſe I need not tell you what we are to underſtand by the improvement of time: ſeeing this is too plain to need any explication in a general ſenſe. And neither can it be dark to Chriſtians, in a ſpiritual ſenſe. For it can denote nothing elſe, but ſuch a rational and religious regulation of our time and diſpoſal of our talents and opportunities, eſpecially as we live under the advantages and means of the goſpel, that we may ever be occupied in doing and getting good, ſo as to find favour in the ſight of God, and attain afterwards to the happy enjoyment of him. For, ſeeing, as the Apoſtle ſays, (2 Cor. vi. 1, 2.) now is our accepted time and day of ſalvation, we ought to take heed to

ourſelves, that we receive not the grace of God in vain. We ought to reckon therefore that this ſpace of our life is given us, that we may be taken up in promoting the honour of God, and our own and other men's good, as being, in all theſe reſpects, in a ſtate of trial. Let us therefore improve our time, by labouring to gain our own aſſent and conſent fully to the terms of the goſpel; by ſtudying the word of God more and more; by a cloſe and impartial trial of ourſelves; by frequent and fervent prayer; and by an univerſal and conſtant obedience to all God's laws and inſtitutions. And let us argue ourſelves into this as our duty, by conſidering how dearly our Lord Jeſus has purchaſed our day of grace and opportunity of ſalvation; how many have been damned and loſt for ever, by their not improving this talent of time; how dreadful the condemnation of ſuch will be, who chuſe darkneſs rather than light; how unreaſonable it is, to be ſo careful of the body, and ſo regardleſs of the ſoul; how ſtrange it is, that we ſhould not do that for our eternal advantage, which worldlings do for a little temporal gain; and, laſtly, how uncertain we are of the continuance of our time and ſeaſon of grace.

And ſeeing, in order to improve time aright, we ought to lay hold of all the ſpecial ſeaſons and peculiar opportunities, which God puts into our hand for this end: theſe will deſerve to be particularly conſidered by us. But ſince it is the work of prudence, that every man know and obſerve his own circumſtances and providential occurrences, in order to a right improvement of them accordingly; all that I can do here, is to hint at ſome generals this way. Therefore,

1. Let me adviſe you to make a right improvement

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of the circumſtances of your outward lot in the world. Are you in a ſtate of proſperity? Then, be thankful to your gracious Benefactor. Are ye honoured? Improve this, that God may be honoured through you. Are ye in any place of power and authority? Lay yourſelves out to advance the kingdom of God among men. Are ye rich? Remember what Solomon ſays, "That wiſdom is good with an inheritance;" Eccleſ. vii. 11. and therefore ſerve God with what he gives you. But if ye be in adverſity, deſpond not: but remember, that as proſperity gives men greater advantages for doing good; adverſity affords more ſeaſons, uſually, for getting good. For in the day of adverſity we are more ready to think and conſider, than in the time of proſperity, as Solomon ſays, Eccleſ. vii. for then is the time and ſeaſon to conſider the vanity and uncertainty of the world, to know ourſelves better, and God more, and to prepare more readily and throughly for another world. 2. Improve your circumſtances, in relation to company or retirement. If ye be hurried with company, labour to gain that by them, which may in ſome meaſure make up your loſs of time. If ye can get no good from them, then ſtudy, if poſſible, to do them good, by inſinuating what may tend to their advantage: and then ye can have no reaſon to reckon your time loſt. But if ye enjoy the company of good and wiſe men, it is not to be believed what profit and advantage may be got by mutual diſcourſes to edification, where men are communicative, and can bear with different apprehenſions about things, without running into heats and quarrellings. But if we are ſhut out from company, we may juſtly look upon ſolitude and retirement, as a happy opportunity of advantage and profit, if we do but know how to improve the ſame,

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by filling up ſuch ſeaſons with ſtudy, meditation and prayer. 3. Improve the means and opportunities of grace and ſalvation. For the end of all that Chriſt has ſuffered and done for us, is to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himſelf a people zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14. Therefore let us ſo hear the word preached, and ſo join with the prayers of the church, and ſo partake of the ordinances of Chriſt, particularly that of the Lord's ſupper; that we may be built up a ſpiritual houſe, as lively ſtones, concurring to the raiſing up of ſuch an edifice; and that we may become alſo a holy prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable by Jeſus Chriſt to God, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And, 4. If at any time or upon any occaſion, ye find the Spirit of God to move your thoughts and affections more ſenſibly than uſual, as the angel moved the waters of the pool, of old: Oh! my friends, neglect not ſuch a fair gale and favourable opportunity; but improve this happy ſeaſon, and ſtrike the iron when hot and malleable. For how dreadful muſt it be to quench the holy Spirit, and ſtifle the convictions, motions and influences thereof, eſpecially ſuch as are ſenſible and peculiar!

But ſeeing, to begin aright, is one great mean to carry on any thing ſucceſsfully, we ought to ſet about the improving of our time as early as we can, without any delay or procraſtination in a matter of this weight and moment. For it is only our preſent time that we can reckon ours. For as our yeſterdays are irrecoverable: ſo our to-morrows are but may-be's and uncertainties. Therefore we are always called to hear God's voice to-day, if we will do it at all. And, therefore, let us not delay, but make haſte to keep God's righte-

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ous and holy commandments. See Heb. iii. 7. 13. 15. chap. iv. 7. 2 Cor. vi. 2. Luke xix. 42. Isa. lv. 6. Job xxii. 21. Mat. v. 25. Psal. cxix. 60.

Now, if we would improve our time and life to advantage this way, let us be sure not to neglect the morning of time. And here, then, let me put you in mind of four mornings of time. The 1. is the morning of your life, i. e. the time of your youth, health and strength. Such of you as have lost this season, in whole or in part, pray double your diligence, in the improvement of what remains of your time. But such of you as are young, be advised to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, Eccles. xii. 1. and act so as ye may afterwards look back upon your past days with satisfaction and pleasure. 2. The morning of every day is a time to be peculiarly improved for God and your own good: for the doing so has a mighty influence upon us as to the right spending of the rest of the day. It is a season, that is not only AMICA MUSIS, a friend to study, as the old saying is, but that is favourable also ORATIONI ET DEVOTIONI, to prayer and devotion: for while our minds are fresh and undisturbed with the hurries of company and business, it is certainly the fittest time for duty as well as study. And, therefore, the saints of old were careful not to neglect this season, See Psal. v. 3. xcii. 2. Job i. 5. Mark i. 35. Acts v. 21. 3. Improve the morning of every week carefully, viz. the Lord's Day. For as we discharge our duty then, we may expect God's blessing through the week more or less. But if we refuse to give God what is his due on his own day; we must not think it strange, if God withdraw from us on those days that he has allowed us to serve ourselves upon. And hence

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it is no wonder, if we find that true, which many have confeſſed with ſorrow at the hour of death, that the prophanation of the Lord's Day has been the inlet to all their after-ſins and miſeries both. And, 4. perhaps it may not be unprofitable for us, to ſet apart the morning of every year, to review what we have done, and what has happened to us the year paſt, and to beg God's bleſſing through the year following. It has been the practice of ſome holy perſons to do this: ſome reckoning the year, as it is uſual with us in our computations, from the 1ſt day of January; and others reckoning it from the day of their birth, or baptiſm, or converſion: in all which every one may take which way pleaſeth him beſt. And now, that we enter upon the morning or beginning of a new century; let me beſeech you to begin this work now, if ye have neglected it during the years of the laſt age, which ye have run through, whether theſe have been more or fewer.

Having thus given you an account of time, and the opportunities and ſeaſons of it to be improved: I ſhall proceed to recommend this duty from three conſiderations; and then to direct you how to do it, by propoſing three rules to be obſerved this way.

In the firſt place, therefore, let me earneſtly recommend this duty to you from three weighty conſiderations.

The firſt Conſideration is this, That it is the duty and wiſdom of every one of us, to be duly and deeply impreſſed with the ſenſe of the worth and value of time.

I might take occaſion here to ſhew you, from innumerable examples, that the beſt and wiſeſt men, in all ages,

ages, both Chriſtians and Heathens, have been under the deepeſt and moſt conſtant impreſſions of the value of time. But, as this would be too long for this place, ſo it is needleſs to inſiſt upon it; ſeeing I believe ye can as little form an idea of a wiſe or good man, that does not value and improve time, as I can.

Therefore, I ſuppoſe, there is no need to prove to you the worth and precioufneſs of time. To you, I ſay, who know the uncertainty of it, and yet how much depends upon the improvement and loſs of it. But if any of you need any awakening this way; conſider how valuable time will appear to a convinced ſinner when he lies upon a death-bed, who ſees himſelf dropping into another world, and yet apprehends that his peace is not made with God. O, cries the poor wretch, that I had ſpent leſs of my time on the world and my luſts, and more of it in minding the good of my own ſoul! O that I had thoſe hours and days back again that I ſpent in taverns and bad company! O for a year, or a month, or a week, at leaſt, of health and ſtrength, to make my peace with God! And pray, my friends, were ye never ſick, and under ſome ſuch thoughts then? Were ye not ſenſible then of miſ-ſpent time? Or did ye never promiſe amendment and reformation, if God ſhould recover you? Where is now the performance of your vows? O, if there be any that forget God, and neglect to do as they have promiſed and reſolved, let them conſider their duty and intereſt in time, leſt God tear them in pieces, when there is none to deliver them. Alas, my friends, what would thoſe poor wretches give for one day, nay for one hour, who are now in the infernal priſon? What would they give for one offer of a Saviour, who are now lament-

ing their ſlighting of the goſpel, and their miſ-ſpending their time and opportunities of ſalvation? Therefore do ye learn to value time more, and improve it better, before it be too late to retrieve loſt opportunities. And this leads me to another conſideration. Therefore,

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The ſecond Conſideration is, That it is our wiſdom, not only to be impreſſed with the ſenſe of the worth and value of time, but to be duly and deeply affected and influenced this way, ſo as to ſet about the improvement of it, as our greateſt and moſt concerning duty and intereſt.

For it is not ſpeculation but practice that we are to mind here: And, therefore, if our apprehenſions of the worth of time do not influence us to improve it, they will only tend to our greater condemnation. Therefore, that what I have ſaid may ſo affect you, as to incite you to your duty this way; I ſhall not grudge a little pains in writing further on this head, in hope that ye will not be weary in reading what is written. Take it not amiſs, therefore, if I addreſs you with ſome ſeriouſneſs and warmth of affection, and, through you, all others that may caſt their eyes upon theſe ſheets.

My dear friends, ſome of you have lived twenty, ſome thirty, ſome forty, ſome fifty, ſome ſixty, or more years in the world. Now, I beſeech you to conſider what ye have been doing all this time. Have your performances born any proportion to the mercies ye have received from God? Have ye been faithful to improve your talents for your God and Saviour? Have your convictions brought forth a ſaving converſion? Have your reſolutions and promiſes been all performed?

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Has it been a matter of conſcience to you, to ſerve God with the beſt of your time, the greateſt vigour of your thoughts, the utmoſt energy of love and delight, and, in a word, with all your heart and ſtrength?

If ye have been deficient this way, then pray conſider not only how impoſſible it is to bring back any part of the time that is paſt, but how little, or, at leaſt, how uncertain the time is, that remains to be lived over. And if any be ſecure this way, becauſe they are young, or ſtrong and healthful, let them remember how often the old carry the young to the grave, and the weak and ſickly ſee robuſt and vigorous perſons drop off before them. And what is our life at longeſt? Does not the Scripture labour, as it were, under a want of metaphors, to deſcribe its vanity, when it compares it to a hand-breadth, a ſpan, a vapour, the graſs, that is ſoon mowed down, the flower that quickly fades, the ſhadow that declines, and the tale that is told? How poor a thing then is it, to be able no otherwiſe to number our days and years; than by our being born at ſuch a time, and having lived to ſuch another time? There is, therefore, no more unreaſonable deſire in the world, than to live long, where there is no concern to live well: For this is only to wiſh to have more time to miſ-ſpend, to ſin longer than others, and to be more miſerable in the other world. Beſides, that it is impoſſible, as the courſe of things is now, to live long in a proper ſenſe: For, as the following diſtich expreſſes it,

Vivere quiſque, diu quærit, bene vivere nemo:
At bene quiſque poteſt, vivere nemo diu.

That is,

To live long, all deſire; to live well, none:
Yet all may live well, but none can live long.

For is it not for this very end that time is given us, that it may be improved and lived well, in order to our being fitted and prepared for the happy ſtate of a glorious immortality? Surely God did never make ſo glorious a creature as man, endued with an immortal ſoul, merely to live the life of the beaſt, to eat, and drink, and ſleep, or to enjoy his ſenſitive luſts and pleaſures.

Think then, my friends, that according as ye improve or miſimprove time, ye are to be happy or miſerable for an eternity. For we are now in a ſtate of trial, and upon our behaviour, in order to be rewarded or puniſhed afterwards, as we ſhall be found to have acted, when we come to be judged: Therefore we may rejoice now, and take our pleaſure, as we pleaſe (Eccl. xi. 9.); but we have reaſon to rejoice with trembling (Pſ. ii. 11.), when we remember that we are to be called before God, and judged for all we do now. For they that live in the fleſh, (1 Pet. iv. 2, 5.) according to their luſts, muſt give an account to him, that is to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. And then every one of them will hear that dreadful word, "Take the unprofitable ſervant, and caſt him into the outer-darkneſs, where there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth," Matth. xxv. 25.

Conſider, therefore, that it is impoſſible to recall any moment of time that is loſt, in a proper and phyſical ſenſe: And that thus it is a fooliſh and ridiculous wiſh;

O MIHI PRÆTERITOS REFERAT SI JUPITER ANNOS!

O if God would give me back the years that are paſt! But yet in a moral ſenſe, we may be ſaid to bring back paſt time, when, by doubling our diligence, we do, in ſome ſort, retrieve the miſimprovement of former days.

days. But then it muſt be remembered, that this muſt be done now or never; for if our time comes to an end here, there is no returning to a ſtate of trial again, ſuch as we now enjoy: "If a man die, ſhall he live again?" No, alas, ſays Job: "For, as the cloud is conſumed, and vaniſheth away; ſo he that goeth to the grave, ſhall come up no more (i. e. to live on earth again, as the following words explain the meaning). He ſhall return no more to his houſe, neither ſhall his place know him any more." Therefore let us all ſay with him, and improve the thought, "When a few years are come, then ſhall I go the way whence I ſhall not return." See Job vii. 9, 10. xiv. 14. xvi. 22.

Now, beſides all theſe things, it may be of great uſe to enforce this conſideration, to take a view of the complexion and genius of our age, or the time wherein we live. For if the apoſtle Paul, when he exhorts his co-temporary Chriſtians to redeem the time, gives this as the reaſon of his advice, "Becauſe the days are evil," Eph. v. 16. I am ſure we have much more reaſon to call the days wherein we live by this name. For the ſenſe of the apoſtle, when he calls the days wherein he lived, Evil Days, is no doubt this chiefly, if not only, that they were afflictive and perilous times: For times of trouble are called evil times, or evil days, frequently in Scripture: See Gen. xlvii. 9. Pſal. lxxvii. 19. Amos v. 13, 18. But we may juſtly take this in a larger ſenſe, in reference to our times; for an age or time may be denominated evil, either with reſpect to the abounding of errors, profaneneſs or calamities. And upon all theſe accounts theſe days of ours may be juſtly ſaid to be evil. For as to errors, how many and how groſs are theſe? How many deny the Lord that bought them?

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How many oppoſe his divinity and ſatisfaction both? Yea, how many revile him as an impoſtor, and ridicule all revealed religion? Nay, how many dare blaſpheme God, and deny his being, and even the firſt principles of natural religion? And, as to Profaneneſs and Immorality, where did we ever hear or read of more among Chriſtians? Nay, it may be a queſtion, if ever the Heathens were worſe than moſt Chriſtians are now. And, again, as for calamities and troubles, we ſee what other churches have ſuffered of late, and do ſuffer ſtill: and we ſee in how tottering a condition all the Proteſtant intereſt is. And though, I believe, it will prove a burdenſome ſtone to the enemies of Chriſt; yet how far God may ſuffer them to prevail for a time, none of us know: Only I am afraid we are upon the brink of very great troubles. And that (as I have hinted already), as we have been, like Iſrael of old, peculiarly bleſt with mercies and privileges, and are as peculiar and ſingular in ſinning; ſo we are like to be puniſhed in a peculiar and particular manner alſo. So that if there be (as ſure there is) a rule to judge of the connection of mercies, ſins and judgments, we may ſee our caſe, as well as that of Iſrael of old, in the prophetical threatnings of God to that people, when he ſays, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I puniſh you for all your iniquities," Amos iii. 2.

Seeing, therefore, this is the ſtate and complexion of our time, let us take heed to ourſelves, that we be not involved in the ſins of it, leſt we come under the judgments alſo that ſeem to haſten on this generation. Conſider, for this end, the Apoſtle's advice; "Beware, (ſays he) leſt as the Serpent beguiled Eve, ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is

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in Chriſt," 1 Cor. xi. 3. Let us not, therefore, hear the inſtruction that cauſeth us to err from the words of knowledge, Prov. xix. 27. but let us beware, leſt, being led away with the error of the wicked, we fall from our own ſtedraſtneſs, 2 Pet. iii. 17.

But yet be not ſo ſelfiſh as to mind only your own concerns, but remember that ye are members of a city, of a church and nation, and that ye are members alſo of the catholic church of Chriſt, that is every-where diſperſed. And therefore act as under all theſe ties and relations. And if ye can do no more, interceed at leaſt with God, that he may be gracious: Stand in the gap, that ye may, if poſſible, avert his diſpleaſure. Act, therefore, as ſerious, faithful and importunate remembrancers of the Lord, giving him no reſt, but crying unto him night and day, until he ariſe, and until he make his Zion and Jeruſalem a praiſe in the whole earth. See Iſa. lxii. 6, 7. Luke xviii. 7.

There is yet a third Conſideration, which I would add to the former, in order the more effectually to recommend this duty to you, viz. The improvement of your time. And this is what is indeed frequently inſiſted upon, but, I am afraid, very little lived up to, viz. That we are in the ſight, and under the inſpection of an all-ſeeing God, who is to be our Judge at laſt.

O, my friends, is this a matter only of ſpeculation to you? Dare any of you do that in the ſight of God, which ye would be aſhamed to do in the view of the world? I remember I have heard of an eminently holy man, who, being tempted by a harlot to commit lewdneſs with her, in a place where ſhe was miſtreſs, and had

had the command, ſeemed to conſent for the preſent, with this condition only, that ſhe ſhould find out a cloſe retirement, where none could be preſent and ſee what they did. Upon which ſhe carried him from chamber to chamber, and from place to place. But he had ſtill ſomething to object againſt the privacy of every one of them. At length ſhe brought him to a very dark and obſcure corner, telling him that none could ſee what was done there but GOD and the Devil. What! ſaid he, Is that nothing? You muſt carry me where neither GOD nor the Devil can ſee us, elſe I will never do what you deſire. And, I remember alſo, I have heard of another, who being tempted in like manner, conſented upon condition of having liberty to chuſe the place. Which being granted, he choſe the public market-place. When ſhe refuſed this, ſaying, ſhe could not for ſhame do ſo in the open view of the world: He replied, that he durſt far leſs do this in the ſight of God. And aſked, how ſhe durſt do that in the ſight of God, which ſhe was aſhamed to do before men.

Even the Heathen moraliſt, Seneca, adviſeth men to act in all things, as if they had both GOD, and the wiſeſt and beſt of men looking on. "Set Cato, Scipio, "or Lælius before you," ſays he, "or ſome ſuch ex-"cellent perſon, upon whoſe appearing even the moſt "wicked perſon would be frighted from doing amiſs "openly." But he adds, in another place, "What "will it avail you, to hide yourſelves and your actings "from men, ſince there is nothing concealed from God! "For he looks into our breaſts, and is preſent in our "very minds and hearts." And, elſewhere, "It avails "a man nothing," ſays he, "to ſhut up or ſtifle con-"ſcience, ſince every thing we do, lies open to God's

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view; and, therefore, our great wiſdom is to act ſo, that we may approve ourſelves to him.

How conſonant are ſuch expreſſions to the ſacred ſtandard of our holy religion? And what ſhall we anſwer to our Maſter at the great day, if we ſuffer ſuch perſons to exceed and outrun us, who are Chriſtians? Let us, therefore, mind the principle that ſwayed Joſeph, when he ſaid, under a very great temptation, conſidering his low and obnoxious condition; "Shall I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. And let us imitate David, who ſet the Lord always before him, and looked upon him as preſent at his right hand, to the end that he might never be moved, but be encouraged ſtill to truſt in him, Pſal. xvi. 8. For we are ever to remember, that our ſecret, as well as public ſins, are ſet in the light of God's countenance, Pſal. xc. 8. ſeeing the darkneſs hides us no more from God, than the meridian light of the ſun, Pſal. cxxxix. 12.

But we muſt conſider likewiſe, that we have not only a conſtant witneſs and inſpector of our actions without us, but one within us, even our own conſcience; which doth excuſe or accuſe us, according as we behave and act. And as one ſays well on this head, "QUID PRODEST NON HABERE CONSCIUM, HABENTI CONSCIENTIAM? i. e. What avails it to have no witneſs of our actions, while we have a Conſcience that keeps an exact regiſter of all we do? Only we muſt remember, that this is but a ſecondary witneſs: "For, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things," 1 John iii. 20.

And now, my friends, I have done with what I had to ſay to the Three Conſiderations, from which I propoſed to recommend and enforce this great duty of improving our time. And I leave it to you to conſider, whether what I have ſaid be not ſufficient this way, through the bleſſing of God, and your pains and concern to apply to yourſelves what has been ſaid.

Therefore, in the ſecond place, I proceed to direct you, how ye may attain rightly and ſucceſsfully to improve your time to the beſt advantage, as ye are Chriſtians and accountable creatures. And this I ſhall do, by propoſing Three Rules, which will take in all that is neceſſary or uſeful this way: though the firſt rule is the principal and only direct one, which doth take in the whole of our duty this way; the ſecond and third being only ſubſervient unto this, though exceedingly uſeful, if not neceſſary alſo, in their places.

The firſt Rule is this, That ye take heed, that ye loſe not your time, and the opportunities and ſeaſons thereof, by ſin and vanity: But that it be always filled up with the conſcientious and diligent diſcharge of all neceſſary duties.

This being, as I ſaid already, the principal rule, in order to the regulation of our time; and being ſo contrived, as to direct us both negatively and poſitively, as to what we are to avoid and what we are to do; I ſhall accordingly conſider it diſtinctly, in both the parts of it.

The firſt part of this rule teaches us how time is loſt, and what we are therefore to avoid, in order to the

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right improvement of it. And it is neceſſary to premiſe this, before we conſider the other part: for we can only then apply ourſelves to fill up our time wiſely, in the performance of thoſe duties, in the diſcharge whereof the redemption and improvement of time conſiſts; when we apprehend what thoſe things are, which are detrimental and hurtful to our ſouls, both here and hereafter.

Now, in the general, we are to take care to reſcue our time out of the hand of thoſe two grand robbers, that thieve it away from us, viz. Sin and Vanity. For as we are carefully to avoid the miſ-ſpending of our time, by thinking, doing or ſpeaking what is ſinful in itſelf: So we are to take heed of ſuch things which, tho' they are not ſimply ſinful in themſelves, are yet ſuch trivial matters or by-concerns, as become ſinful to us, when we ſpend too much time upon them, or mind them as if they were our moſt weighty and principal buſineſs.

But becauſe thoſe things that are evil and ſinful in themſelves, ſuch as blaſphemies and lies, immorality and profaneneſs, ought not to be ſo much as named among Chriſtians, or have a moment's time allowed them, ſo as to be entertained or thought upon with delight or deſign, far leſs brought forth in life and action, we ſhall therefore paſs by theſe wholly at preſent; in order to conſider thoſe things that, though lawful in themſelves, ought not to be ſo minded, as to take up all or moſt of our time. Allow me, then, to give you my advice in theſe things following.

Be not too prodigal of your time, in the gratification of your ſenſes, and the ſervices of your body. Let the

cultivation and adorning of your ſouls take up more of your time, than the clothing and dreſſing of your bodies. Be not burried in ſleep and ſloth too long, while time is ſo ſhort and uncertain, and ye have ſo much buſineſs to fill it up with. Neither do ye allow yourſelves more time than is neceſſary or convenient, for the feeding and pampering of your bodies. Be not like them therefore, who are ſo ſeverely reproved by God, for living ſenſually in this world, when they ought to have minded higher things. Of whom this ſad character is given; That they put away far from them the evil day; that they lay upon beds of ivory, and did eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the ſtall, chanting at the ſound of the viol, drinking wine out of bowls, and anointing themſelves with the chiefeſt ointments: But that in the mean time they were altogether unmindful of the ſtate of the church, and no way grieved for the afflictions of Joſeph, Amos vi. 3—6. "Therefore (as the apoſtle exhorts, Rom. xiii. 13, 14.) let us walk honeſtly, as in the day (or clear ſun-ſhine of the goſpel), not in rioting (or in dancings) and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying: for theſe things (ſays he) are the making proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof."

Spend not too much of your precious time in divertive exerciſes and recreations. We may, indeed, uſe theſe not only lawfully but profitably, both with reſpect to the health and ſtrength of the body, and the vigour even of the mind; which being unbended for a while with innocent amuſements, will be in better caſe to return again to cloſe thinking. But, we muſt not make recreation our buſineſs, as too many do, who are ſo intoxicated with the ſecret witch-

witchery of gaming, as to have their minds rendered almoſt incapable of any cloſe application to ſerious and important matters.

Spend not too much of your time in company and diſcourſe, unleſs buſineſs oblige you to do ſo. The company of Atheiſtical and wicked men, eſpecially if they be witty, and of an engaging temper, carries commonly an infection with it; and their diſcourſe breathes a ſecret and inſinuating poiſon, that every one has not a ſtrong enough antidote in his nature to reſiſt. And though the company we aſſociate ourſelves with be good, yet we are to remember the old ſaying, AMICI SUNT FURES TEMPORIS, that friends are frequently the thieves that rob us of our time; the commodity that, of all others, we are to be moſt parſimonious of, ſeeing we can never retrieve its loſs. To viſit friends, is often a great duty; but it is frequently to the hurt both of the viſiters and viſited that theſe are made. For as much time is commonly loſt this way to no purpoſe, ſo the diſcourſes that are the entertainment of moſt companies, are too often mere vanity, if not worſe: for it is too cuſtomary at ſuch times to give way to fooliſh talking and jeſting, or to cenſorious reflections upon other perſons. There is an innocent freedom indeed, and facetiouſneſs in diſcourſe, which is both allowable and pleaſant: But, alas! how ſoon doth this degenerate, if great care be not taken to keep our minds in a right poize? And if I appear to any to be too rigid in what I ſay on this head, let it be remembered, that Chriſt has forewarned us, That we muſt give an account of every idle word, as well as unwarrantable action, in the day of judgment, Mat. xii. 36. As, therefore, we are to avoid moroſeneſs

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on the one hand; ſo we are to take care that we tire not our friends by too frequent or too long viſits. There are indeed ſome ſuch friends in the world, though very rare to be found, who, the more they are together, do the more love and profit one another. But as to ordinary friends, the caſe is quite otherwiſe: In relation to whom, Solomon gives this wiſe advice; "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's houſe, leſt he be at laſt weary of thee, and ſo hate thee," Prov. xxv. 17. That is, according to the gloſs of ſome upon the words, Make thyſelf precious; wear not out every man's threſhold, by obtruding thyſelf upon them; neither make thyſelf vulgar and cheap, as a mean commodity, that is every man's mony.

But remember alſo, that ye may be guilty of miſpending your time in vain and unprofitable muſings, as well as in vain diſcourſe. Idle thoughts are as fooliſh a miſpence of time as idle words: For every ſort of thinking and meditating is not judicious no more than holy. And though a man think not upon his luſts, he may think very impertinently, and conſequently ſinfully:

And this is not only the fault and weakneſs of plebein, but of learned heads, who miſpend time frequently as much as any other ſort of men, upon their DIFFICILES NUGÆ, their uſeleſs, yet painful curioſities and niceties. This was the cuſtom of the learned doctors of old Athens, who ſpent their days in almoſt nothing elſe but telling or hearing ſome new notion, ſcheme, or theory; and then diſputing, PRO ET CONTRA, for and againſt it, Acts xvii. 21. But while they were earneſt to diſpute about FORMA SUBSTANTIALIS, UNIVERSALE

A PARTE REI, FUGA VACUI, apathies, the poſſibility of motion, and ſuch like NUGÆ and whims, they forgot God and ſolid religion; and were ſuch ſceptics, or ſuperſtitiouſly ignorant (for ye may interpret the words either way), that in the midſt of their multitude of gods, they were willing to erect one altar more, with this inſcription, verſ. 23. AGO-OTHEO, "To the unknown "God." It is true indeed, that there are many curioſities of this kind, that a wiſe man may improve to great advantage. But when they are made our main or only buſineſs and ſtudy, inſtead of being PARERGONS, or by-ſtudies, we are certainly far out of the road of true wiſdom. What profit has the Metaphyſician, in abſtracting from all particular beings, that he may define ENS generically, as UNUM, VERUM, BONUM, while he is ignorant of Him that is truly ſuch. To how little purpoſe at length will the Mathematician find he has ſtudied, in order to adjuſt and determine the proportions of points, lines, ſides and angles, if he neglect the proportions of piety and virtue? What will it avail the Aſtronomer to ſee the planets through a tube, if he fall ſhort of the happy world at laſt, that is above all theſe? Is any man the better for being able to adjuſt and reconcile the Egyptian, Chaldee, and Grecian dynaſties, by reducing all the different æras of nations to the Julian period, while he neglects to number his own days ſo, as to apply his heart to true wiſdom? And, laſtly, what advantage has any man, by being able to ſpeak all the languages in the world, while he worſhips and praiſes God in none of them?

Nay, I tell you further, that a man may even miſpend his time in the ſervice and worſhip of God, circumſtantially conſidered. For though we worſhip God,

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yet what advantage can we reap by it, if we do ſo, ignorantly or hypocritically, or cuſtomarily and merely for the faſhion, or profanely and irreverently, or dully and heartleſly? Nay, we may loſe our labour this way alſo, when by this we thruſt out more immediately incumbent and neceſſary duties; or when we neglect the performance of this, till we be altogether unfit for it, offering thus to the Lord a corrupt thing, while we have a male in our flock.

And if thus we may miſpend time, how much more are we like to do ſo, while the cares of the world, and the inordinate deſire of what we call its pleaſures, profits and honours, juſtle out religion, both from our thoughts and lives? Solomon adviſeth us not to labour to be rich, but he immediately ſubjoins, "Ceaſe from thy own wiſdom," Prov. xxiii. 4, 5. Whereby he inſinuates, that a man muſt be mortified to his carnal and worldly ratiocinations, and taught by the Spirit of God to know the true value of things, before he can poſſibly learn this leſſon from him. However he poſitively determines theſe two things, That he that haſteth to be rich, hath an evil eye; and that he that does ſo, ſhall not be found to be innocent, Prov. xxviii. 20. 22. Mottos that all men might find it convenient to write on the head of their books of accounts. And if Solomon's words have little effect upon you, conſider what a greater than Solomon ſays of a covetous or anxiouſly diſpoſition and practice in the 6th chapter of Matthew, where he repreſents and condemns it as unchriſtian and heatheniſh, and as unreaſonable and pernicious. And, after all, remember theſe ſerious and pungent words of his, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world,

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and loſe his own ſoul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his ſoul?" Mat. xvi. 26.

And now, I hope, I have ſaid enough as to the things we ought to avoid, if we would rightly improve our time. But, ſeeing it is not ſufficient to know how time is loſt, unleſs we know alſo what we are to be occupied about, and wherein the beſt and wiſeſt diſpoſal of our time ſtands; therefore we muſt further conſider the great and neceſſary duties with which we ought to fill up the ſeaſons and vacuities of our life.

And therefore I proceed now to

The ſecond part of this great and principal direction concerning the improvement of our time: Which is this, That we take care to fill it up with the conſcientious and diligent diſcharge of all neceſſary duties.

And here, tho' in the general we cannot but know, that our time is wholly to be taken up in getting and doing good; yet we muſt remember, that it is only in relation to time that we are to conſider our duties in this place. And therefore I am only to conſider here thoſe great and neceſſary duties which are always obligatory upon us, and the neglect of which is inſeparable from the miſimprovement of time. For it cannot be ſuppoſed that I ſhould ſo much as hint all thoſe things that come under the general notion of duty; or conſider thoſe things which particular circumſtances and emergents render obligatory to us, or ſuch duties which are called relative, from the ſtations we are in, and the relations we bear to others.

There are therefore a few things only which I ſhall recommend to you as altogether uſeful and neceſſary, and which none of us can ever plead exemption from.

And, in the firſt place, let me beſeech you to improve your time, by frequent, diligent and ſerious reading and ſtudying the holy Scriptures. In the firſt book of which ye will find your minds led up to the firſt antiquities, which no other book beſide can furniſh you with any juſt account of. There we ſee the origin of man and the world; man's primeval ſtate, when firſt created; the original of ſin and death and miſery; the ſubverſion of the firſt race of men, by the great deluge which heathen antiquities ſpeak of only as through a cloud; the firſt ſpring and dawning of mercy and hope to lapſed man; the ſucceſſion of the firſt and moſt primitive church, and the beginning and progreſs of Gentile idolatry, ſuperſtition and wickedneſs; together with the firſt original of nations, cities, arts, governments, languages: and in all theſe the ſuperintending providence of God, in its juſtice and goodneſs, wiſdom and ſteadineſs. And by this knowledge we bring back, as it were, all paſt time, and make it our own as to our profit and advantage. In the other books of Moſes, we have an account of God's erecting a poor oppreſſed people to be a church, and God's peculiar poſſeſſion: Wherein we ſee his wonderful appearance for them, by ſigns and miracles; his ſtrange and unuſual way with them in all their journey, in trying, feeding, and preſerving them; his giving them laws eccleſiaſtical, moral and political; his wrapping up moſt profound myſteries under ceremonies and cuſtoms, and his bringing them into a noble country with power and glory, deſtroying their enemies before them;

them; together with innumerable obſervable occurences and theoretical and uſeful things to be taken notice of therein. The hiſtorical part of the Old Teſtament, that follows that of the law, as the Jews call it, gives us a relation of moſt admirable and great revolutions and tranſactions as ever fell out in the world. Wherein we may obſerve the various, and yet uniform ſteps of divine providence in governing the world and the church; God's trying, and yet rewarding the righteous; his permitting ſin, and yet puniſhing ſinners. In all which occurences we have the beſt examples that can be, to be imitated by us, and an account of the worſt alſo, that we may avoid ſuch pernicious courſes. The book of Job is a mirror, wherein we may learn what afflictions the beſt men are liable unto, and what reproaches they may unjuſtly fall under even by good men like themſelves, through miſtake and infirmity: as alſo, how we ought to behave in the time of calamity; and what the end of the Lord at length uſually is. The pſalms are the moſt excellent model of practical and experimental piety, and the beſt prayer-book and directory for devotion that ever the world was bleſſed with. The Proverbs of Solomon are the moſt excellent and refined ethicks that were ever publiſhed, or ever will be. Eccleſiaſtes is the nobleſt picture and demonſtration of the world's vanity. And Solomon's Song the moſt ſpiritual paſtoral, the fineſt allegory, and the divineſt poetical deſcription of the love between Chriſt and devout ſouls that ever ſaw the light. The prophetical writings give us the nobleſt and diſtincteſt idea of God's government of nations, and the righteouſneſs and equity of all his providences and adminiſtrations; beſides innumerable other leſſons to be learned from thence.

And as for the New Teſtament, the firſt thing that occurs to us, is the moſt excellent part of the whole Bible; I mean the fourfold hiſtory of our bleſſed Saviour. O, let your thoughts dwell long, and ſtrike deep here; for all the hiſtorical paſſages of the goſpels, all the wiſe and ſage parables to be found there, all the miracles wrought, all the propheſies mentioned, all the truths revealed, and all the counſels and exhortations there given; I ſay, all theſe are as ſo many rich veins of what is more precious than the fineſt gold, and admirable and uſeful above all thought. The book of the Acts of the Apoſtles, gives us a noble and impartial account of the beginning and progreſs of the goſpel, and the firſt ſettlement of the church: Wherein we have a naked and clear view of Chriſtianity in its pure and primitive dreſs; together with ſome moſt profitable examples, and uſeful diſcourſes. The Apoſtolical Epiſtles give us a full and copious account of the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus, both in its principles and practice, its original and deſign. So that theſe are ſufficient alone, if rightly underſtood, to enlighten our minds, to influence our affections and deſigns, and to regulate our lives and converſations. And the book of the revelation, though dark and enigmatical, repreſents to us in an auguſt and lofty manner, the rectorſhip of our Lord Jeſus in governing the world, overuling and diſpoſing the deſigns and actions of men, and making all things at length work together for the illuſtration of his own glory, and his peoples good.

Thus we ſee ſomething of the ſpecial properties of the ſeveral parts of the ſcripture, and what excellent things may be learned from thence. But let us conſider alſo thoſe properties that are common to the whole Bible,

and

and every part of it. Let us therefore look upon all the books that compoſe this ſacred volume, as divinely inſpired, and as deſigned, in all reſpects, for our profit and edification, 2 Tim. iii. 15. Therefore let us read and ſtudy them, not as the word of men, but as they are indeed the word of God; i. e. ſo as to prize and value them according to their worth; to love and delight in them; to praiſe God for them; to meditate upon them as men, not as children; and to conform our lives wholly to them. And in order to become thus the humble, impartial and obedient ſcholars of Chriſt, let me put you in mind of one thing, than which nothing is more neglected, and yet nothing is more neceſſary in order to profit truly by the bible, viz. That ye have a care of laying down any opinion or ſcheme of opinions in matters religious, previouſly to your having impartially examined the ſacred Scriptures in ſuch matters. For they that do ſo, come not to be taught of God, but to dictate to the Almighty, and are not afraid often to withdraw the ſacred text, in order to force it to ſpeak, not what it really does, but what they would have it do, as beſt ſuites with their prejudices, paſſions and party-deſigns, that I ſay not luſts alſo. Therefore let me deſire you (as I have often done from the pulpit) to make the Bible itſelf, and particularly the New Teſtament, your chief (and in a proper ſenſe only) ſyſtem, confeſſion of faith and creed. For whatever excellency there is any human compoſures of this kind, we are to own them no farther than we find them to agree and harmonize with the divine oracles.

In the next place, let us improve our time, by frequent, ſerious, and cloſe meditation on divine and profitable things. Let the character of the bleſſed man,

Pſalm

Pſalm i. 2, 3. be ours, by our meditating on the laws and truths of God day and night. For to what purpoſe do we read the Scriptures, and other good books, if we be not at pains to penetrate into the things therein contained? Now, it were endleſs, and in ſome ſenſe impoſſible to name all thoſe things that may be profitably thought upon. But perhaps it may not be amiſs to ſuggeſt to you the principal heads of ſacred theology; by which, as ſo many avenues, ye may attain mentally to converſe with God and truth.

In the firſt place then, meditate on God himſelf, his attributes, works and word, and the bleſſed perſons of the Godhead. Then think on man in his firſt innocent ſtate, in his lapſed condition, and begun recovery; and on thyſelf particularly, thy nature, thy faculties, thy ſtate, thy faults, thy end, thy duties, and thy privileges and advantages. Meditate often on Jeſus Chriſt, his perſon, his properties, his offices, his merits, his ſufferings, his conqueſt, his buſineſs and work now in heaven, and his management of the church on earth, and the world in general. Then think of the Holy Spirit, his office, work and influences. And let the church alſo be conſidered in its obligations, ordinances, ſufferings, progreſs and victory. And think likewiſe of the particular ſtate of the ſaints of God on earth, their temptations, the principles by which they are acted, their converſation, and the promiſes made them. Hence let your minds be led in to contemplate the great bleſſings of true religion, ſuch as converſion, juſtification, adoption, ſanctification, peace of conſcience, joy in the Holy Ghoſt, communion with God, the prelibations of heaven, and final perſeverance. And then let your thoughts terminate upon what we call the laſt things.

Think

Think therefore on death, its certainty: yet the uncertainty of the time of it; the great change it brings upon us; how terrible it will be to be unprepared for it, and the happineſs of being ready for ſo great a change. Then think upon the diſſolution of this world, when the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat, and this vaſt pile of our planetary world become one great bonefire. And from thence let your minds contemplate the great day of judgment, thoſe grand aſſizes, where all mankind muſt be impartially judged, and ſentence be pronounced upon them accordingly. And after all let your thoughts paſs beyond the limits of time, and ſtep into the eternal ſtate. There go down to the infernal priſon for a while and view the horrors of the place, the frightful aſpect of the company, and the intenſeneſs and perpetuity of the torments. Then mount the ſteep aſcent, and ſoar aloft upon the wings of contemplation, to the bliſsful regions of the celeſtial paradiſe. There ſatiate your thoughts with the pleaſures and beauties of the place, the felicity and joys of that ſtate and government, the excellency of the company, the glory of the diſcoveries made there, the noble employment that takes them up, and the eternity and immutability of all theſe. Think then upon theſe few hints, my friends, (where there are almoſt as many ſubjects as words) and ye can never want matter for your thoughts to work upon.

And now, ſeeing all our ſtudy and meditation muſt be ſo managed, that we may receive ſome real and abiding advantage, let us ever call ourſelves to a ſerious and impartial account as to the ſpending of our time: For how can we ſatisfy ourſelves, without converſing with our own ſouls, in order to know how it is with them? And how can we attain to know ourſelves,

if

if we never examine and try how it is with us? If merchants, and men of buſineſs are ſo careful to ſet down every thing in their journals and books of account, that they may be able exactly to balance what they call their debit and credit, their loſſes and gains; ought not Chriſtians to mind their eternal concerns, with the like exactneſs and accuracy? How wonderfully does Seneca ſpeak on this head, when he tells us, that in imitation of one Sextius, whom he highly commends, he had been accuſtomed to examine himſelf every night? "When at night, ſays he, the candle is out, and all is "ſtill and quiet, then do I look back upon, and ſearch "all the day paſt, by meaſuring and running over all I "have thought, ſaid or done. I hide nothing from my-"ſelf; I overlook and paſs by nothing. I ſay to myſelf, "ſo and ſo thou haſt done unadviſedly; do ſo no more. "And again, I aſk myſelf, What evil have I healed? "what vice have I reſiſted? what paſſion have I mode-"rated? what leſſon have I learned? and what good "have I done? And O, ſays he, what a ſweet ſleep "follows, after this recognition of a man's ſelf, when "one is conſcious of his impartiality and ſerioufneſs, in "the review and cenſure of himſelf and his own man-"ners!"

And to this purpoſe we find an excellent direction in the Golden Verſes, as they are called, of old Pythagoras; which begins thus, Μηδυπνον, &c. The ſenſe of which I render thus:

Before thine eyes to ſlumber ſweet give place,
Be ſure the paſt day's Journal firſt to trace.
Survey thy ſteps and actions all: then ſay,
Which good? which bad? how ordered were they?

O

O then, my friends, let not it be ſaid of us, that we live in the neglect of this duty, leſt Heathens riſe up in judgment againſt us and condemn us.

But ſince we are not born for ourſelves only, let us be concerned to promote the good of others alſo. Let us therefore improve time, by being uſeful in our ſtations to the church of God and good men, and to all as far as we can; for ſo we are obliged, as we are members of communities, Cities and nations, and as we are inhabitants of the world. And in order to be thus uſeful, let us ſet before ourſelves the glorious example of Chriſt, whoſe meat and drink it was, to do the will of his heavenly Father, and who went about always doing good. And therefore let us be aſhamed to live as uſeleſs plants in the world, which do only cumber the ground.

And, in order to perform all theſe things aright, and ſo to improve our time to the beſt advantage, let us be ſure to ſpend as much of our time in prayer, as poſſibly we can: For as it is thus that we attain to moſt immediate and direct communion with God; ſo it is this way that we attain to be ſtrengthened and directed in the performance of all the duties we are obliged to be taken up in. Therefore let us remember, that it is not without juſt ground that we are commanded to pray always, and to pray without ceaſing, Eph. vi. 16. 1 Theſſ. v. 17. The ſenſe of which expreſſions I take to be this; that as we are to keep up ſtated times of ſolemn prayer to God, and to have recourſe to him, in a more ſpecial manner, upon extraordinary emergents and occurrences, in order to be peculiarly directed and aſſiſted then from God: So we are ever to keep ourſelves, as much

as poſſibly we can, in a praying-frame: and, for this end to fill up all the vacuities of other affairs and ſtudies with ejaculatory prayers and breathings. But, beſides all theſe things, there is one thing further that I never found any writer take notice of, that I look upon to be the principal deſign of ſuch expreſſions: And this is, That we be careful to proſecute the deſign of our prayers from one time of our life to another, waiting for the anſwer of them, and improving the ſame in praiſe, when received. E. G. If a Chriſtian pray long for a full victory over ſuch or ſuch a temptation or luſt, let him proſecute this deſign in all his prayers, until he receive an anſwer; which, when he has got, let him turn this from the catalogue of his petitions to that of his thankſgivings. And ſo let him act alſo, with reſpect to mercies to be received, promiſes to be fulfilled, and miſeries to be averted.

And thus I have at length finiſhed the firſt and principal rule I had to propoſe to you, with reſpect to the improvement of time, in both the parts thereof. And now I am to hint to you two more, which are only ſubſervient ones; though, at the ſame time, worthy of your moſt ſerious thoughts.

The 2d Rule, therefore, is this, That in order to the right improvement and diſpoſal of time, we do both dedicate ourſelves ſolemnly to God, and as explicitly as we can, in order to ſpend our lives wholly in his ſervice; and be concerned, in order to this, to keep a ſecret and exact regiſter or diary of all our own actions, and the providences of God in relation to us.

But

But seeing I have hinted something in relation to both the parts of this rule in another discourse, viz. That concerning the ministerial work: I shall not therefore trouble you with any thing more upon either of these heads.

Only let me say this one thing further, in relation to the keeping of a Diary or private Register; that every man must be left to his own discretion as to the manner and method of adjusting those things that occur to him in his life. As therefore some may think it best to set things down according to the Series of the time they fall out in: So others may look upon the method of Heads, or common places, to be the best. And if any serious person shall think this last way the best (for as to the first the method cannot be miss) he may perhaps find these Heads not unreasonable or useless, viz. That after a short series of his life, to be further continued, he proceeds in this order.

1. To consider God's providence to him, in adapting and disposing of him for particular ends, agreeable to the faculties of his soul, and constitution of his body, together with his eternal circumstances, in a relation to both. 1

2. What his conversion has been, with the time and manner of it. 2

3. How far, and in what way he has been led into covenant with God, with the renovations of the same. 3

4. What crosses and troubles he has met with, and how far these have been improved and sanctified. 4

5. The dangers, ſpiritual or temporal, he has been delivered from.

6. The ſins he is moſt inclinable unto naturally, and thoſe he has been moſt guilty of and overcome by.

7. How frequently, in what manner, and upon what occaſions, he has been deſerted by his God; and, ſo far as he can conclude, for what ends theſe have happened to him.

8. What evidences he has had of the wrath and diſpleaſure of God, upon the account of ſin.

9. And what intimations he has met with of the love and kindneſs of his heavenly Father.

10. What temptations, inward or outward, he has been moſt aſſaulted by, and what he has found to be the beſt antidote and relief againſt theſe.

11. What obſervations and experiences he has met with, to confirm him in the belief of the Chriſtian religion, as to the Being of God, the Divinity of Chriſt, and the exiſtence of inviſible Powers.

12. What obſervable and remarkable things have happened to him, in his buſineſs, ſtudies, or converſe with men, that may be of uſe to himſelf or others, as to life and converſation in the world.

13. Particularly, what has occurred to him in the remarkable turns and changes of his life, in health and ſickneſs.

14. What

14. What intimacy, familiarity and communion God has graciouſly admitted him into with himſelf; and what anſwers and returns of prayer God has granted him.

And, 15. What ſpecial and peculiarly diſtinguiſhing circumſtances he has been under, wherein the footſteps of a peculiar conduct have been conſpicuous to him.

Under theſe Heads I humbly ſuppoſe all things may be regularly diſpoſed, that can be thought neceſſary to compoſe a private Chriſtian's regiſter. Though I preſume not to dictate to any man, but leave every one to follow his own method.

The 3d and laſt Rule is this, That (in order to the right regulation of time) we ſet down ſome ſhort, rational and natural directory, according to which we may be enabled and aſſiſted rightly to improve our time.

But ſeeing every one is to compoſe this, according to his own circumſtances, there is no man that can juſtly preſcribe to another in this matter. Nay, there is none that can ſet to himſelf ſuch a directory, as to all particulars, that he can be ſuppoſed to be tied up to, at all times; ſince the providence of God is ſo various this way, that our circumſtances render our condition, and conſequently our duty almoſt as different as the weather is. And therefore a ſpiritual prudence is that which is to every one the great directory of his life. For when the providence of God renders our particular rules and methods impracticable, unlawful or inconvenient; it is both our duty and wiſdom to fall in with the preſent circumſtances of things, rather than with our own

own arbitrary determinations; ſeeing then the ſtate of the queſtion is, Whether God's method or ours ſhould be followed?

All therefore that I ſhall propoſe to you here, is the conſideration of three things; which are eaſily minded, and may be put in practice every day, whatever our circumſtances are.

1. When we awake in the morning, let this be among your firſt thoughts; How ſhall I ſpend this day to beſt advantage, for the honour of God, and my own good? And when ye have conſidered what is moſt proper to promote theſe ends; then firmly propoſe to yourſelves your buſineſs through the day, and fixedly reſolve upon acting ſo; and accordingly proceed and fall to work.

2. In the middle of all your buſineſs, or ſtudies, allow yourſelves ſome time of breathing, in order to reflect upon theſe two things, viz. What ye are, and what ye do; putting theſe frequently to yourſelves, by way of query, thus: What am I? i. e. am I ſure I am in favour with God? am I indeed regenerated? am I ſpiritual in thought, affection, and deſign? And again; What do I? am I employed as I ought to be? are my ends right? are the means I make uſe of lawful and proper? are my ſtudies, or my buſineſs, ſuch as I ought now to be occupied about? do I behave in all reſpects as one that is journeying towards the better country?

3. In the evening ſleep not, before ye have examined yourſelves, as to the actions and occurences of the paſt day. But having ſpoken already to this duty, I ſhall only

only add here, that it will be of great uſe for you to examine yourſelves as to two things, by way of queſtion to yourſelves, thus: What has God's providence been to me this day? what have I ſeen or heard that deſerves ſpecial obſervation and improvement? what mercies have I received? what troubles have I met with? what dangers have I eſcaped? did God aſſiſt me, or deſert me in my devotions and buſineſs? have I learned nothing new from his holy word? did he ſeem to receive, or ſhut out my prayers? And, again, What has my way been towards God? have I done nothing to diſhonour him, or to diſcredit my profeſſion? have I acted ſo as to approve myſelf to my God, in thought and deſign, as well as in word and action? wherein have I failed in my duty? what have I done for religion? and what for my own good, or the good of others? what have I done that I ought to beg the pardon of? and what have I to praiſe God for?

Now, my friends, I hope theſe three generals are eaſy, both to be remembred and practiſed. For as for the particular queſtions I have ſuggeſted, they are only propoſed to ſhew more fully the deſign of the general ones: and therefore every one may pick and chuſe, or vary from theſe, as his own circumſtances do require, and as his prudence will direct: I only deſire you then to remember the three heads themſelves, with relation to the morning, the day, and the evening, as they are comprehended in theſe three mnenomical words, propoſe, reflect, and examine.

And thus I have at length come to the end of that which I had to ſay to you upon this great and practical head of improving time to the beſt advantage. Which

I conclude with a few watch-words. Spend not your time ſo, as to be afterwards obliged bitterly to repent of what ye have done: Spend no time on that which ye cannot review and look back upon with comfort: Spend no time ſo, as ye dare not pray for a bleſſing from God upon what ye do: Spend no time, without ſome reſpect to God's glory, or your own and others good. And be ſure ſo to ſpend and improve your time, that your great work may be done before your life end; that when your few days are lived over, ye may joyfully enter in upon a happy eternity.

Now, having finiſhed all I had to ſay, by way of improvement of the apocalyptical thoughts I have preſented you with; I deſire ye may candidly interpret my deſign, and favourably conſtrue my performance. And one thing I hope ye will remember, that ſeeing this diſcourſe is by way of epiſtle, I have therefore uſed an epiſtolary freedom, both in what I have ſaid, and in the way of writing, not tying myſelf up to ſo cloſe a method as in other diſcourſes, though I have not altogether neglected even that: But if I have failed in any reſpect, remember further, that I write to thoſe I look upon to be my true, good, and kind friends. Let therefore the name and ties of friendſhip plead for me, where ye may diſcern my infirmities, and induce you to paſs a favourable ſentence upon my attempt to aſſiſt you in the way to heaven.

And now that I write to ſuch dear friends, and have mentioned the ties of friendſhip, let me beg of you that ye would make it your buſineſs to live together as ſuch: For there is nothing Chriſt has enjoined us more, than mutual love, inſomuch as he has made it the badge of

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our Chriſtianity, when he tells us, "By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye love one another," John xiii. 35. And therefore it was one great end of his coming into the world, to introduce a divine and univerſal friendſhip among men, Eph. ii. 14, 15. 17, &c. For as the devil promotes his kingdom in the world, by diſſentions, emulations, hatred and malice: So our bleſſed maſter carries on his, by union, gentleneſs, peaceableneſs, univerſal kindneſs, love and charity.

But beſides a general friendſhip, it would be of great uſe to cultivate a peculiar one with one or more, whoſe diſpoſition is moſt agreeable to ours. And ſeeing there is little of this now to be found in this ſelfiſh age, let me give you ſuch a deſcription of it, as may make you fall in love with it. And if this appear too florid, remember that, as the ſubject itſelf is ſo, it is part of a youthful compoſure of mine, in a letter to a worthy friend, who had deſired my thoughts upon this head many years ago. "True friendſhip is a divine and "ſpiritual relation of minds, an union of ſouls, a mar-"riage of hearts, and a harmony of deſigns and affec-"tions: Which being founded on a known agreeable-"neſs, and entred into by a mutual hearty conſent, "groweth up into the pureſt kindneſs, and moſt endear-"ing love; maintaining itſelf by the openeſt freedom, "the warmeſt ſympathy, and the cloſeſt ſecrecy. And "ſuch friends are as twins, every way alike; or like "ſweet flowers, agreeing in beauty, like the roſe and "lily, the primroſe and violet twiſted round one ano-"ther, and mixing both colours and ſmells. Or they "may be compared to two pleaſant rivulets flowing "from one ſpring and fountain, though ſeparated per-

" haps by ſome unlucky riſing of the ground; yet meet-
" ing again in ſome kind and flowry mead, which they
" bleſs by their chearful and gentle meanders; and it
" may be thence ſeparated again at ſome diſtance,
" where they glide along ſilently, murmuring now and
" then to one another, and mutually complaining of
" the rude banks that obſtruct their joining; until at
" length, having run their full courſe, and becoming
" one ſtream, they pour themſelves forth into the great
" ocean itſelf, and become one with it alſo. So that,
" like the reſt of the bitter ſweets of this life, friendſhip
" has its ups and downs until it flow into heaven, from
" whence it took its riſe: which is the conſummation
" of all divine friendſhips, and where all true friends do
" at length happily meet, never to part."

And now, my friends, I ſhall conclude this long epiſ-
tle in the words of a * famous Doctor and Father of the
antient Church: " Learn, O faithful and religious
" men, and carefully apprehend the deſign of the goſpel
" Polity. For which end, ſtudy to conquer fleſhly luſts,
" to be humble in heart, pure in mind, and maſters of
" your paſſions. If ye are called to ſuffer, act heroical-
" ly, and do ſomething over and above mere paſſive-
" neſs, for the honour of your Lord. If ye are unjuſt-
" ly treated, evidence that ye are not contentious: If
" hated, love your enemies; if perſecuted, endure it;
" and if reviled, anſwer no man otherwiſe than by pray-
" er and good wiſhes. Die to ſin, crucify your affec-
" tions for God, and caſt all your care upon your Lord
" and maſter. That thus ye may at length reach the
" glorious Place, where millions of angels, and the
Martyrs,

* Baſil. Magn. in his Νηπτικα προς τους νεους. The words begin thus: Νηπτε συ, ὁ προς ἀνδρωσιν, &c.

"glorious Aſſembly of the firſt-born are praiſing God, "and where the holy Apoſtles, Prophets, Patriarchs, "Martyrs, and all the righteous are. To this bleſſed "Society, let us labour and pray to be joined, through "Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. To whom be glory for ever."

Now, that both ye and I may attain, through grace, to be thus happy, is and ſhall be the ſerious, fervent, and conſtant prayer of,

My very dear Friends,

London, Jan. 1. 167⅞. being the firſt day both of the year and century.

Yours to love and ſerve you in the goſpel of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt,

ROBERT FLEMING.

A

POSTSCRIPT,

CONTAINING

A ſhort Account of the firſt principles of the Apocalyptical Interpretations advanced in the preceding Diſcourſe.

AFTER I had finiſhed the foregoing diſcourſe, and that all the ſheets were almoſt printed, I was earneſtly urged by a friend, to ſay ſomething to ſecure the foundation I go upon: eſpecially becauſe the learning of Grotius and Dr. Hammond had influenced many to follow another way of interpreting the Revelation, as the reputation of Mr. Baxter had ſwayed others to think well of the ſame. And when I urged that Dr. More, in his Myſtery of Iniquity, and Dr. Creſſener, in his Demonſtration of the firſt principles of the Proteſtant interpretations of the Apocalypſe, had done this ſufficiently already: he replied, that theſe books were both voluminous and dark, and not eaſy to be purchaſed by every one; and that therefore ſome ſhort account of this matter at this time ſeemed to be neceſſary. I urged many things againſt this, as that this advice came too late, and that ſhould I contract never ſo much, it would ſwell this part of my book too much, to keep a due pro-

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portion with the other Diſcourſes, and indeed make the whole too bulky. But after all, importunity and the reſpect I bore my friend, prevailed with me, to ſay ſomething to all thoſe things, that he thought I ought to premiſe. Therefore not to ſpend any longer time, in giving the reaſons, why I did not ſpeak to theſe things before, in their proper place, or why I do ſo now: I ſhall give my thoughts of this book and the firſt principles of the right interpretation of it, in ſome propoſitions, which do gradually lay the foundation of what I advanced before.

I. Propoſition. The Revelation was written by the Apoſtle John, and is a ſacred and canonical book of the New Teſtament.

I hope there is no Chriſtian that will diſpute the truth of this propoſition with me. For, beſides that the ſtile of John may be eaſily traced in this book, notwithſtanding the difference of the ſubject from that which he wrote of in his goſpel and epiſtles: he does frequently make mention of himſelf, and that with ſuch peculiar circumſtances, as agree with none but the Apoſtle; as we ſee chap. i. verſe. 1, 2, 4. 9. See alſo chap. xxi. 2. and xxii. 8.

I know indeed that ſome of the antients doubted of this, as Caius a Latin Father, mentioned by Euſebius, hiſt. lib. 3. cap. 28. and Dionyſius of Alexandria, who made a great noiſe againſt it for a while, as we ſee in Euſebius alſo, hiſt. lib. 7. cap. 4. But yet even this man declares that he owns it to be a ſacred book, tho' not written by the apoſtle John. Wherein he ſpeaks, what we muſt look upon to be altogether abſurd. For

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if St John be not the author, it muſt be an impoſture, ſeeing his name is inſerted in it, as being the penman. So that if it be not St John's, it is no ſacred book. Or if it be a ſacred book, the author is none but the beloved apoſtle. But the weakneſs and inconſiſtency of this, denies his reaſons againſt this book, are ſufficiently tho' briefly expoſed by Monſieur du Pin, both in his preliminary diſſertation to his Bibliotheque des auteurs Eccleſiaſtiques, and in his Hiſtory of the Canon of the books of Scripture.

And if this were any argument againſt the divinity of this book, that ſome perſons have doubted of it, or denied it to be canonical, there is hardly one book in the New Teſtament that would ſtand the teſt: ſeeing we find in the antient church-hiſtory that there have been not only particular men, but even ſects of them, that have excepted, ſome againſt one book, and ſome againſt others. ~~And we know, that the~~ epiſtles of James and Jude, and the ſecond and third epiſtles of John, and that admirable epiſtle to the Hebrews, have been controverted, as well as the Apocalypſe: of the authority of which neither Papiſt nor Proteſtant, Grecian nor Armenian Chriſtian doubts at this day.

And as all Chriſtians do now acquieſce in the Revelation, as a Canonical book; ſo excepting thoſe I mentioned, and the hereticks called Alogians, all the eminent fathers of the church received it of old. So did Juſtin Martyr, Dialog. cum tryph. Irenæus, lib. iv. cap. 37. and 50. and lib. 5. cap. 30. and apud Euſeb. lib. 5. cap. 8. Tertullian, adv. Marc. lib. 3. cap. 23. Origen in Mat. and in Joh. and apud Euſeb. lib. 6. cap. 25. and Euſebius himſelf, Hiſt. lib. 4. cap. 28. Nay all the other

other Fathers agree in this alſo, viz. Epiphanius, Victorinus, Theophilus, Cyprian, Methodius, Jerom; and other authors quoted by Euſebius, Epiphanius and Jerom, viz. Melito, Hippolitus, Victorinus, &c.

But for my own part, were all theſe authorities wanting, there is that in this book itſelf, that would inforce me to own it as divine. For beſides the auguſtneſs of its ſtile, the wiſdom of its contexture, and the purity of its deſign and counſels, there is ſomething that I want a name for, that commands my belief and veneration, and inſinuates itſelf into my affection and conſcience, as if Chriſt himſelf breathed ſomething divine in every line. But the clear view of the fulfilling of the ſeveral parts of its propheſy, is an argument that even ſeveral other books of the New Teſtament want.

II. Propoſition. The book of the Revelation of John was written after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

The notion of Grotius, upon which his interpretation of the Apocalypſe is founded, is this; That the ſeven kings or heads of the Beaſt, mentioned Rev. xvii. 10. are not to be underſtood of ſeven ſeveral forms of government, but of ſeven particular emperors, viz. Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Veſpaſian and Titus, and that Domitian is the eighth, who was of the ſeventh, becauſe as he pretends, he governed during his father's abſence.

The foundation which he lays, for the probation of this, is that John was baniſhed into Patmos, in the reign of Claudius: but that though he ſaw his viſions then, he did not write them till Veſpaſian's time. For he

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muſt make this laſt ſuppoſition, as well as the firſt, elſe his notion would be condemned immediately, ſeeing it is ſaid, that five of theſe kings were fallen, Rev. xvii. 10. that is, ſays he and Hammond, when he wrote, not when he ſaw theſe viſions. But how falſe this is, any body may ſee with half an eye; ſeeing theſe words are not John's but the angel's to him. And therefore the defenders of this opinion muſt find out five Emperors that were fallen before Claudius, if they will reſtrict theſe heads of the Beaſt to particular men: For if the angel ſpake theſe words to John in the days of Claudius, they muſt relate to them that went before, or to none.

This is enough to deſtroy this notion of theirs, and I know not how it is poſſible for any of their admirers to ſalve their credit this way. But ſeeing the principal thing they found upon, is this, that John ſaw the apocalyptical viſions in the days of Claudius, and that ſo all, or at leaſt moſt of the Revelation relates to things that fell out before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; I ſhall ſay ſomething further to diſprove this aſſertion, and to confirm the verity of our propoſition.

Now there are only two things adduced by Grotius and Hammond, to prove that John was in Patmos in Claudius' reign: the firſt is, that Claudius raiſed a perſecution againſt both Jews and Chriſtians, and that being the firſt perſecutor, it is probable that John was baniſhed at that time. The ſecond is, that Epiphanius does expreſly aſſert, that it was by Claudius that John was baniſhed to Patmos.

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As to the firſt of theſe, it is nothing but a ſuppoſition without any proof; for we have no account, either in the acts of the apoſtles, or in any other writer, that Claudius did ever perſecute either Jews or Chriſtians. And Lactantius de Mort. Perſ. does expreſly aſſert, that no Emperor did perſecute the Chriſtians before Nero. It is true, Suetonius ſays, "Claudius Judæos "impulſore Chreſto tumultuantes Roma expulit." And Luke tells us, that Claudius baniſhed the Jews from Rome; which occaſioned Aquila and Priſcilla, and other Chriſtian Jews, to retire from Rome: but neither of of them ſay that he perſecuted the Chriſtians, or even the Jews. Now, as for the expreſſion of Suetonius, Impulſore Chreſto, or Chriſto, the meaning muſt be this, that the Jews that did not believe, going about to ſtir up the government at Rome, as they did every-where elſe (as is plain from the book of the Acts) againſt the Chriſtians, and appearing againſt them in a tumultuous manner, upon the occaſion of Chriſt; complaints might probably be brought to the emperor, who no doubt upon this account, baniſhed all of that nation from Rome: So that Suetonius having a confuſed notion of Chriſt, might eaſily be induced to expreſs himſelf this way. And now that this was all that Claudius did againſt the Chriſtians, is plain to me, from one argument that has eſcaped Dr. More, but is to me unanſwerable, taken from the 18th chapter of the Acts; where, after the ſacred hiſtorian had taken notice of Claudius' baniſhing the Jews out of Rome, and of Aquila and Priſcilla's being lately come upon that account from Italy to Corinth; he tells us of Paul's lodging with them, becauſe he was of the ſame occupation. But being preſſed in ſpirit, to preach Chriſt, upon the coming of Silas and

Timothy from Macedonia, he goes into their ſynagogue, and reaſons with the Jews and proſelytes there, upon this head: and having converted ſome, particularly Criſpus, the chief ruler of the ſynagogue, and Juſtus, in whoſe houſe he afterwards diſputed; Criſpus no doubt being thrown out of his office, and Soſthenes put in his ſtead, and Paul continuing to preach in Juſtus' houſe, which joined to the ſynagogue; the Jews are incenſed to ſuch a degree, as to riſe tumultuouſly againſt Paul. Soſthenes therefore the new chief ruler of the ſynagogue, and the unbelieving Jews make an inſurrection, and ſeize upon Paul, and carry him to the judgment-ſeat, before the proconſul Gallio, that excellent Roman, the elder brother of Seneca. He tells the Jews, that if Paul, or any other man, were guilty of what was lewd, wicked or unjuſt, that in that caſe he was obliged to puniſh ſuch perſons according as the Roman law and juſtice did require. But ſeeing they accuſed Paul of nothing of that kind, but only of doctrinal matters, relating to their own law and religion, he had nothing to do with them; and therefore he drove them all away, and ſet Paul at liberty, which made the Gentiles fall upon Soſthenes the chief author of this tumult, and beat him before the judgment-ſeat; which Gallio permitted to be done and connived at, either as judging that he did deſerve to be ſo treated, or ſuppoſing it might prevent the Jews from acting ſo factiouſly and tumultuouſly again. Now, after this ſhort, but exact account of this hiſtory, it will be eaſy to ſee how precarious and groundleſs, nay falſe, Grotius' opinion is, of a perſecution's being raiſed againſt Jews and Chriſtians, in the days of Claudius. For if there had been any ſuch thing, or any edict for it, how came Gallio to tolerate a public ſynagogue of the Jews, and ſuffer Paul to preach openly?

openly? Or if the Chriſtians were only ordered to be perſecuted, why did not the Jews uſe this, as the reaſon of their accuſing Paul, who to be ſure wanted not good will to have done ſo, and were not ignorant that this would have been the main argument to prevail with the Proconſul? And had there been any ſuch edict, can we imagine that Gallio was ignorant of it? for ſo he muſt have been, ſeeing he tells the Jews, that he had no orders to puniſh any man for his religion or ſentiments that way, but only thoſe that were guilty of wickedneſs or lewdneſs in life. If any ſay, that his temper was to care for none of theſe things? I anſwer, this expreſſion may indeed denote his temper; but I ſuppoſe it ſpeaks forth not only that, but his principle and ſentiment, as judging it unrighteous to perſecute, or puniſh any man for mere opinion. But whatever this had been, had there been any edict for perſecuting the Chriſtians or Jews, he durſt not have neglected his orders, eſpecially when the edict muſt have been ſo recent, and when he had what might have paſt for a juſt reaſon of his puniſhing both the party accuſing, and the party accuſed, viz. their diſturbing (as he might have repreſented it) of the public peace. But indeed it is too plain to need any further proof, that Claudius' baniſhing the Jews out of Rome, was accompanied with no perſecution, either againſt them or againſt the Chriſtians. And this Dr. Hammond confirms, by what he ſays in his annotations on Acts xxvi. 31. forgetting, that this way he deſtroys his own foundation of interpreting the revelation: Where, upon theſe words of Luke, that Agrippa, Feſtus, and Berenice, and the reſt of the company, after they had heard Paul's defence, did conclude, that he had done nothing that deſerved either death or impriſonment; the Doctor obſerves, that

the reaſon why they did conclude ſo was, becauſe there had been as yet no edict emitted againſt the Chriſtians, by any of the Emperors: and this was the reaſon alſo, ſays he, why Gallio, the proconſul of Achaia, ſaid publicly, that it was not for him to judge of things that the Roman laws had determined nothing about. For, continues the Doctor, though Claudius had commanded the Jews to leave Italy, by which the Chriſtian Jews were forced to go away alſo, not as they were Chriſtians, but becauſe they were Jews; yet there was yet no law made againſt Chriſtians, as ſuch, at this time. It is true, he ſays, that John was not only baniſhed, as Aquila and Priſcilla were, but confined in the Iſle of Patmos. But he ſhould have given the reaſon, why John was the only perſon perſecuted. However I ſhall examine this aſſertion, and the reaſon that the Doctor gives for it in other places of his Annotations.

We come therefore now, in the 2d place, to conſider the teſtimony of Epiphanius, upon whoſe credit alone Grotius and Hammond believe that John was in Patmos, in Claudius' time. And here, by the way, I cannot forbear to obſerve the ſtrange miſtake of Dr. Lightfoot, who agrees in the main with theſe learned men, in interpreting the Revelation, in relation to the Jews, before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; and therefore makes John to ſee theſe viſions long before that: but has this peculiar to himſelf, that he imagines John was not baniſhed there, but went thither voluntarily, to preach the goſpel to the inhabitants; whereas John himſelf doth expreſly tell us, that he was there as a ſufferer and witneſs for Chriſt, chap. i. 9. "I, John, who alſo am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jeſus Chriſt, was in the Iſle that is called Pat-

Patmos, for the word of God, and for the teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt." So that as this refutes Dr. Lightfoot, and confirms what Grotius and Hammond agree in, that John was not in Patmos as a traveller, but as a priſoner and ſufferer; ſo it is enough to refute even them alſo: for the words do plainly inſinuate, that John was not the only perſecuted man at this time, but that there was then a perſecution raiſed againſt all Chriſtians in general; and, therefore, we may be aſſured, that he was not in that iſland in the days of Claudius, in whoſe time we have proved there was no perſecution.

But to return: Epiphanius ſays, indeed, That John ſaw his viſions in Patmos, in the reign of Claudius. Hereſ. 51. ſect. 12. and 33. But can his ſingle authority weigh down all antiquity, that ſays the contrary? Shall we believe him rather than Irenæus, who lived two hundred years before him, and was the ſcholar of Polycarp, the ſcholar of John himſelf? Now, what can be plainer than the words of Irenæus, Lib. 5. cap. 30. as they are preſerved in the original by Euſebius, Lib. 5. cap. 8. Hiſt. Eccl. Εἰ γαρ ἐδει ἀναφανδον τῳ νυν καιρῳ κηρυτλεσθαι τυνομα ἀυτυ, δι ἐκεινυ ἀν ἐῤῥηθη τυ ϗ την Αποκαλυ†ιν ἑωρακοτ©. ὐδε, γαρτρο πολλυ χρονυ ἑωραθη, ἀλλα σχδον ἐπι πις ημετερας γενεας, προς τῳ τελει της Δομιτιανυ ἀρχης. That is, "If his name (viz. that of Antichriſt, or the "Beaſt) had been openly to be divulged at this time, "it would no doubt have been told by him that ſaw "the Apocalyptical Viſions: For it is not a long time "ſince he ſaw theſe, but even, in ſome ſenſe, in our "own time," viz. towards the end of the reign of Domitian. And that Irenæus had juſt reaſon to ſay, that John's ſeeing the Revelation was almoſt in his own time, or within the memory of the men of that generation, if not his own alſo, is plain from chronology: For he being the ſcholar of Polycarp, who was martyred

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in the year of Chriſt 167, and being himſelf put to death in the year 202, if we ſuppoſe that he wrote this but ten or twelve years before his death, yet he might juſtly ſay, that there was but about an age's difference from his time, and that wherein John ſaw the Revelation: for if John was in Patmos towards the end of Domitian's reign, it could not be ſooner, in any propriety of ſpeech, than the year 90, ſeeing he began his government An. 81. and died 96. And who can doūbt but Irenæus does deliver here, what his maſter Polycarp had told him? For as none knew the hiſtory of John better than that worthy perſon, ſo none had better opportunity to know what related to this matter than Irenæus, by reaſon of his long and intimate acquaintance with him.

This ſeemed a foundation ſure enough, of old, to Euſebius: and if ſome men had not ſome private ends to promote, by oppoſing it, might be a ſufficient foundation to all men ſtill. Let us therefore hear what this learned hiſtorian ſays on this head: * "In thoſe days, "(ſays Euſebius, viz. in the days of Cerdo, Ignatius, "and Simeon, of whom he had been ſpeaking:) the "apoſtle John, the beloved diſciple, was yet alive, in- "ſpecting the churches of Aſia, having returned after "Domitian's death from the iſland, whither he had "been baniſhed. Now that John was then alive, it is "enough to adduce the teſtimony of two perſons of "great authority, who are worthy of all belief, and "were ever eminent for defending the truth, I mean "Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus; the firſt of whom, "in his Second Book againſt Hereſies, ſpeaks thus: "All the Preſbyters (ſays Irenæus) who lived familiarly "with

* Euſeb. Eccl. Hiſt. l. 3. c. 23.

" with the apoſtle John in Aſia, do aſſure us, that they " had this related to them from John himſelf; for he " lived with them even unto the times of Trajan.— " In his Third Book alſo, Irenæus gives us the ſame " account, in theſe words: The Church of Epheſus alſo, " which was founded by the apoſtle Paul, and was " afterwards under the care of the apoſtle John, until " Trajan's time, is an eminent witneſs of what was de- " livered to us by the Apoſtles. And beſides him, " Clemens likewiſe (ſays Euſebius) does not only take " notice of the ſame time, but gives a particular ſtory " relating to him, in that Book of his, which bears this " title, What rich Man can be ſaved?" And then Euſebius recites the ſtory at length, which were too long to inſert here.

Now if John lived to the days of Trajan, he muſt have been a prodigiouſly old man, according to Epiphanius, who ſays he was 90 years of age in Claudius' time. For giving him all the allowance that can be deſired, viz. that John was ſo old in the laſt year of Claudius, and that he died in the firſt year of Trajan, he muſt have been 134 years old at leaſt when he died; ſeeing Claudius died, A. C. 54, and Trajan did not begin to reign until the year 98, though others ſay, with more probability, not until A. C. 100. Now, beſides that it is not eaſy to believe, that ſo thoughtful and laborious a man ſhould live ſo long, the improbability of what Epiphanius ſays, appears further from this; that if in the year 54 from Chriſt's birth, John was 90 years of age, he muſt have been 36 elder than Chriſt. And if ſo, it ſeems very odd, that Chriſt ſhould ſay to him, from the croſs, " Man, behold thy mother; and to Mary, Woman behold thy Son," John xix. 26, 27. For

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as this ſeems to ſay, that he was at leaſt as young as Chriſt, this account makes him an old man of near 70 years of age at that time. Which as it muſt ſuppoſe Mary to be a very aged perſon of between 80 and 90 at leaſt: ſo it contradicts the conſtant and unanimous tradition of the church, which ſuppoſes him to be very young at that time. Whence Baronious ſays, that he was but 25 years old. And Nicephorus relates, out of an epiſtle of Evodius biſhop of Antioch, that the Virgin herſelf was not then 50; ſeeing Chriſt, as he aſſerts, was born when ſhe was but 15 years old.

Whence it appears, how little we ought to truſt Epiphanius, in oppoſition to all antiquity beſides. Which made Druſus ſay, SCIMUS OMNES EPIPHANIUM IN MULTUS GRAVITER HALLUCINATUM, Lib. 14. obſer. cap. 21. And upon the ſame account Petavius ſcruples not to correct him: for where he has it IMPERANTE CLAUDIO, he writes this ſhort note in the margin, MENDOSE PRO DOMITIANO.

But the truth is, though I am not willing to detract from this author's credit, yet I ſuſpect it was not ſo much an error of judgment as of will, or that which ſome call a PIA FRAUS, that made him deſert the tradition of the church in this matter. For his telling us this ſtory is upon the occaſion of an objection of the Montaniſts againſt the Apocalypſe, taken from this ſuppoſition, that there was no church in Thyatira, when John writ the Revelation; which it ſeems, he thought would ſerve another turn, if he inverted it, by telling them John ſaid ſo only by way of propheſy. Whence he proceeds to prove the verity and divinity of the book: and therefore thought his argument would be the more

more cogent, the further he run up the date of the Revelation and John's being in Patmos. But as this was a poor as well as unlawful ſhift: ſo I ſhall leave him and his authority both, to thoſe that have more time and leiſure to conſider them further.

For to me there is proof enough from the Revelation itſelf, to aſſure us, that it was written in Domitian's time. For it is plain, not only from ch. i. ver. 9. which I touched upon before, but from the ſtrain of all the ſeven epiſtles which John writes to the churches of Aſia, that at the time of his being in Patmos or rather before, there had been a ſevere perſecution upon them. Therefore he tells the church of Epheſus, that ſhe had laboured and endured, and had not fainted under the troubles that had come upon her, chap. 2. ver. 2. And ſo the Chriſtians of Smyrna are told of their tribulation, and exhorted not to fear impriſonment or any thing that they ſhould ſuffer, ver. 9, 10. This being added, that they muſt expect tribulation for ten days: which by the way is no inconſiderable hint; ſeeing the perſecution of Domitian, from the firſt beginning of it, laſted about ten years; which, in the dialect of St John, are called days. I might mention many other things, but this is plain, that the church was under perſecution every-where at that time, if it were only from theſe and the like expreſſions, Be thou faithful unto the death: and, To him that overcometh will I do ſo and ſo. And beſides all theſe things, mention is made of an eminent martyr of the Church of Pergamus, chap. 2. ver. 13. whoſe name was Antipas. For the apoſtle John, or rather Chriſt, is ſo expreſs in relating this, that we may deny any thing in the Bible, if we deny this matter of fact. I am not concerned here with the allegories ſome fanciful men

make upon this name, when they tell us, that it ſignifies as much as Antipater or Antipapa: nor have I any thing to do with the ſtories that later authors tell us of him, as of his being biſhop of Pergamus, and of his being burnt in a brazen-bull, with other circumſtantial matters relating to his perſon or death. Let Aretha therefore, Metaphraſtes, Cedrenus, Pererius, Surius, Baronius, Cornelius a Lapide, and a thouſand more be ſuppoſed to miſtake in their relating this ſtory: yet no man ſhall ever make me diſbelieve what St. John ſays of this matter. And I muſt have further proof, than ever I expect to receive, before I can believe that all theſe authors are miſtaken, as to the foundation of their relation; when they unanimouſly tell us, that this martyr ſuffered in the reign of Domitian.

And now I ſuppoſe I have ſaid enough to prove that John was not in Patmos before the reign of Domitian. And if ſo, the foundation of Grotius and his followers falls to the ground. So that theſe Corollaries muſt naturally follow from what has been ſaid, and remain as certain truths.

1 Corol. The viſions of the Apocalypſe relate neither to the Romiſh nor Jewiſh ſtate, before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by Titus.

2 Corol. The Revelation relates to the church and her adverſaries, as to thoſe things that were to fall out after the everſion of the Jewiſh ſtate.

Now before I proceed, I muſt deſire the reader to obſerve the diſtribution, which Chriſt himſelf makes of the ſubjects

ſubjects treated of in this book, chap. i. ver. 19. when he commands John, ſaying, γραφον αἰιδες, και ἀ ειϭι και ἀ μελλει γινεϑαι μιτα ταυτα; i. e. "Write the things which thou haſt ſeen, and the things which are, and the things which ſhall be hereafter." Where it is plain, three things are diſtinguiſhed. 1. The things which John had ſeen, viz. the emblems, figures or hieroglyphical repreſentations, that had been objected to his eyes or imagination, from ver. 12. to ver. 19. Then, 2. The things which were exiſtent and in being at the time when John was in Patmos, viz. the churches planted by the apoſtles, particularly the ſeven Aſiatick ones, to which John had a peculiar relation, and to which he was ordered to direct ſeven epiſtles. And then, 3. The things which were to fall out hereafter, viz. The prophetical part of the book, beginning with the 4th chapter; as is plain from the 1ſt verſe thereof. Where after John had written what related to both the former heads; he tells us, that he heard a voice, like the voice of a trumpet, talking with him, and commanding him now to begin and write the things which he was to ſhew him and repreſent to him emblematically, which were to be μετα ταυτα, after the expiration of the other things mentioned before, which were ſaid then to exiſt, viz. the then preſent circumſtances of the Aſiatick churches.

So that this is a ſufficient anſwer to thoſe, that object, that this book cannot be ſuppoſed to contain a propheſy of the ſtate of the church for any long time, ſeeing it is ſaid, that the things propheſied of in the revelation muſt ſhortly come to paſs, chap. i. ver. 1. For ſeeing we have a double explication of this expreſſion, viz. chap. i. ver. 19. and chap. iv. ver. 1. I aſk, whether we are to ſtick ſo to the letter of the firſt ſhort propoſi-

tion, as to reject the explication given of it in the following places? It was very proper indeed, when some things in this book did concern the then present state of the church, and some other things that did relate to the future condition of it; to say, as in chap. i. ver. 1. that the prophesy related to things that were shortly to come to pass: because not only were those things to be soon fulfilled that concerned the churches of Asia at that time; but the other things were then also to enter upon their begun accomplishment. But that we might not imagine that the whole of this book was to be accomplished shortly, we are told, chap. i. ver. 19. and chap. iv. ver. 1. that what related to future time, was to be accomplished and fall out afterwards. And that accordingly we might see the full extent of this prophesy, we are led down from scene to scene, till we are brought to the end and consummation of all things at last. And now seeing we have proved that this book was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, we must desire our antagonists to find out something else, to which they can accommodate all the figures of the Revelation, before we quit our interpretation, merely because they dislike it, though they can offer us nothing in the room of the same. So that until they be able to enlighten our minds, with another scheme than that of Grotius, which we have sufficiently, though briefly, refuted: I must be bold to lay down this further Corollary, which is the same with our first postulatum in the preceding discourse.

3 Corol. That the Revelation contains the series of all the remarkable events and changes of the state of the Christian Church to the end of the world.

And

And the diſtribution of this book, into the three parts I have mentiened, lays a ſufficient foundation for another propoſiition alſo.

III. Propoſition. The ſeven epiſtles directed to as many churches in the leſſer Aſia, do not immediately relate to the Chriſtian Church in general, and therefore cannot be interpreted prophetically, in any proper ſenſe, as if they did denote ſo many periods of time in relation to it.

I might demonſtrate this, were it needful. But ſeeing it makes nothing for my deſign, which way ſoever men underſtand it, I ſhall ſay nothing to it now: eſpecially becauſe the learned Witſius, my profeſſor and maſter formerly, has ſufficiently demonſtrated what I aſſert in this propoſition, in his Diatribe de ſeptem Epiſtolarum Apocalypticarum ſenſu Hiſtorico and Prophetico, publiſhed in his Miſcellanea Sacra.

And neither have I time to prove other propoſitions, that might appear more neceſſary: only ſeeing the key of interpreting the Apocalypſe, which the angel gives John, chap. xvii. is ſo very plain, I cannot but build another propoſition upon it.

IV. Propoſition. Babylon the great, or the Apocalyptical Beaſt, taken in a general ſenſe, as it is repreſented, with its ſeven heads, and ten horns, is no other than an emblem of the Roman empire.

For beſides that Dr. Creſſener, and others, have proved this, the text itſelf is demonſtration enough to all thoſe that will be at pains, attentively and impartially,

ally, to consider it. For seeing the angel does expresly say, that by this was meant the seven hill'd city, ver. 9. and the city that then did reign over the kings of the earth, ver. 18. I cannot imagine what he could have said more plainly upon this head.

But seeing he represents the empire, under the peculiar consideration, of its being governed by a Woman, who is called the great Whore, or Adulteress; therefore this lays a foundation for another proposition.

V. Proposition. The seven-headed Beast, especially considered, as it is represented as rid upon by the Whore, doth represent Rome to us as it is under the ecclesiastical government of the Papacy, or apostate Church of Rome.

This the angel does sufficiently insinuate, chap. xvii. ver. 8. when he says, "The Beast which thou sawest, was, and yet is not at this time." i. e. That Beast is indeed the same Roman empire which was before, and was represented to thee, chap. xiii. ver. 1. But it is not yet, in another sense, viz. as now thou beholdest it under the rule of a Whore, or the apostate Church of Rome. For this last ecclesiastical form of government is not yet come, but it is to come (when it ariseth) out of the bottomless pit, in order to go thither again, into endless perdition.

And if this be once granted, then that will naturally follow, which I am to represent as another proposition.

VI. Propoſition. The ſeven kings repreſented by the ſeven heads of the beaſt, are no other than the ſeven forms of ſupreme government, that did ſucceſſively obtain among the Romans.

This the angel doth likewiſe ſufficiently inſinuate, ver. 10. which can never be underſtood of particular Emperors, at leaſt not of thoſe Grotius fixed upon, whoſe opinion this way we have already refuted. And therefore ſeeing five of the forms of the Roman government, were fallen in John's time, viz. Kings, Conſuls, Dictators, Decemvirs and Military Tribuns (as Tacitus reckons them, Annal. lib. 1. ſect. 1.): and ſeeing the imperial authority was that which was in being then, we have no reaſon to quit ſo plain and exact an interpretation, until more be ſaid againſt it, than ever has been yet produced to the world.

And were it not that I am confined ſo much now, both as to time, and leſt this poſtſcript ſhould ſwell to an enormous bulk, I ſhould not fear to attempt the demonſtration of theſe laſt propoſitions, and to proceed to others that would lay a further and more ſtrong foundation ſtill, of that method of interpreting the revelation, which the generality of Proteſtants are agreed in. But I hope I have ſaid enough for this place, to ſecure the principles I go upon, by which the things which I propoſed at firſt as poſtulata are, I think, ſufficiently proved. And ſeeing my principal deſign in writing this Poſtſcript, was to refute the hypotheſis that Grotius and Hammond go upon: I leave it to the candid and impartial thoughts of the reader, whether I have not ſaid enough to prove it to be altogether precarious.

And

And now ſeeing every one muſt ſee how much I have been ſtraitened, both as to time and paper, in this Poſtſcript, I hope the reader will paſs the more favourable conſtruction on what defects he may obſerve in my performance, either as to matter, method, or the calculations of time, which I have run upon; in which if there be any thing obſcure or confuſed, the ſtudy of brevity, and diſpatch has occaſioned it. But ſince I have advanced nothing, in relation to future time, but by way of conjecture, nor indeed aſſerted any thing (in relation to that part of the propheſy which is fulfilled) dogmatically and poſitively, but only propoſed my thoughts, after the manner of a rational probability; I ſuppoſe no man will think it worth his while to make a noiſe about little miſtakes, that perhaps I may have been guilty of, through haſte or inadvertency. But if any perſon ſhall take occaſion, from what I have ſaid, to ſtudy the Apocalypſe to better advantage than I have attained to do, and ſhall give the world a better built, and more clearly connected ſcheme of the viſions of this book; I aſſure him, that none ſhall more rejoice in ſuch a performance than I, and I ſhall be one of the firſt to return him thanks for refuting me. For truth is all I ſeek after, and that it may ever, and in all reſpects prevail, is, and ſhall be my conſtant prayer and ſtudy.

A

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING THE

CERTAINTY AND WONDERFULNESS

OF

GOD's DWELLING WITH MEN ON THE EARTH.

X

x Both all Reformed Sacerdotal the Text more literally than the writer, and according to the XXI Revelation Should receive afformatively by that

"The Tabernacle of God is (Like) with Men and (that) He will dwell with them & they shall be his people & God himself shall be with them & shall) be their God !!!

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THE CERTAINTY AND WONDERFULNESS OF GOD's DWELLING WITH MEN ON THE EARTH.

2 CHRON. vi. 18.

But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much leſs this houſe which I have built?

Rev XXI - 3

The INTRODUCTION.

IT was the glory and happineſs of the Iſraelitiſh nation of old, that the almighty God took upon him the character, and entered into the relation of being their king, owning and governing them as his people and ſubjects, in a peculiar manner above the reſt of the world. He laid the foundation of this their impropriation, by many preceding ſteps, in order to engage them to himſelf, for the great and admirable purpoſes and ends he had in proſpect and view. Therefore after he had advanced Shem to the dignity of the Primogeniture of mankind, though a younger ſon of Noah, he was pleaſed to make choice of Abraham, a branch of the family of Arphaxad a younger ſon of Shem, to be the root, from whence this remarkable nation ſhould

ſpring, Geneſis x. 21. 22. See chap. xi. 10. &c. And that they might further diſcern how much they owed to the divine favour, both their being and their advancement to the honour and privileges of being the firſt born of nations, Exod. iv. 22. (as God himſelf expreſly calls them), he ſo ordered matters, that their ſecond parent Iſaac ſhould deduce his original from his miraculous and energetical operation, more than from his father and mother; that both he and his poſterity might ſee and acknowledge that God was their great parent, and was therefore juſtly entitled to the ſovereignty over them as his children. And that he might engage them ſtill further to himſelf, he makes choice of their third parent Jacob, though the youngeſt ſon of Iſaac, to be the firſt in dignity and privilege, even againſt the deſign of the father; that thus alſo they might ſee that it was God himſelf, and not Iſaac, that raiſed them up, and laid the foundation of all their glory and felicity, as well as of that peculiar regal government he was afterwards to exert over them.

But that he might bring them under his government as a nation, when they had multiplied ſo as to conſtitute one; he did not think it enough to have made a covenant with their fathers for this end, unleſs he had their own unanimous conſent. And therefore, though he had brought them into Egypt, and made them to increaſe there; though he had defeated the attempts of Pharaoh and his people, and brought them out from thence by a ſeries of miracles; though he had enriched them with Egyptian ſpoils, and deſtroyed their inſulting enemies by the ſame miracle by which he preſerved them: Yet ſtill he would be their king only with their own conſent. And as this was given by them, in their

agree-

agreement to follow the conduct of God, and of Moſes his ſervant: ſo was it ratified by the ordinance of the paſſover, and ſolemnly celebrated in an univerſal triumph and ſong of praiſe to their God and King, upon the defeat and deſtruction of Pharaoh and his army by the waves of the Red Sea, Exod. xii. and xv.

Upon this foundation it was that he took up his ſpecial reſidence among them, taking them under his immediate protection, giving them laws, manifeſting himſelf unto them, and in a word ruling and governing them; as a father his children, a ſhepherd his flock, a maſter his ſervants, a doctor his ſcholars, a king his ſubjects, or a general his army: for under all theſe relations he repreſents his relation to Iſrael, and his government of them. But of all theſe, the character and relation of king, is that which he delights to be known moſt by, as being indeed moſt peculiarly appropriated to him. So that Joſephus had juſt reaſon to call this ancient government a divine one, or a theocraty, Lib. 2. cont. Appion. 1071.C. For to this purpoſe Moſes himſelf ſpeaks, when he tells them, that they were an holy people unto the Lord their God; for that the Lord had choſen them to be a ſpecial people to himſelf, above all the people that are upon the face of the earth, Deut. vii. 6. &c. Upon which account, he tells them, it was, that God made a covenant with them in Horeb, the ſubſtantial part of which was contained in the decalogue, Deut. v. 2. &c. And hence it was that they ever afterwards owned themſelves the ſubjects of God in a peculiar ſenſe, in which no other nation ſtood related to him. Therefore the Pſalmiſt calls them a people near unto God, Pſal. cxlviii. ult. And pronounceth them to be ſpecially happy, above all others, becauſe God was their Lord

and

and King, Pſal. clxiv. ult. and Pſal. xxxiii. 12. And it were eaſy to ſhew, by the whole management of that people, that God ruled them as a ſovereign prince rules his ſubjects. But this is no proper place for ſuch a diſcourſe.

However one thing I cannot forbear to take notice of, viz. that beſides the deſign God had of doing good to this people, by bringing them under ſuch a divine government; we may juſtly conclude, that he had further and more glorious ends in all this. And two ſuch are plainly enough hinted to us in the Scripture. The firſt of theſe was, no doubt, to keep up the memory of the true God among men, which was in hazard otherwiſe to be obliterated, through the idolatry in worſhip and corruption in morals, that had infected the world, to ſuch a degree, that even the Jews themſelves could hardly be reſtrained from falling in with ſuch univerſally received cuſtoms. The wiſdom and goodneſs of God was ſuch to the race of men, that when neither the memory of the deluge, of the defeat of their project at Babel, of the puniſhment of the Sodomites, with ſuch like providences, had wrought any reformation upon them; he was pleaſed, after all other methods had failed, to keep up the knowledge of himſelf in the world, by this wonderful erection of the Hebrews into a theocraty or divine monarchy; that thus other nations might be enlightened and reclaimed, or otherwiſe left without excuſe, in proportion to their opportunities of knowing the Jewiſh nation. That this is not a precarious ſuppoſition, we may learn even from Moſes: "Keep, therefore," ſays he, "and do all theſe things, which "God hath commanded you by me. For this is your "wiſdom in the ſight of the nations, which ſhall hear all

"theſe

"these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a "wise and understanding people. For what nation is "there so great, who hath God so nigh unto him, as "the Lord our God is in all things, that we call upon "him for? And what nation is there so great that hath "statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law, "which I set before you this day," Deut. iv. 6, 7, 8. &c. And to the same purpose speaks Solomon here, in this very chapter where our text is, ver. 32, 33. "More-"over concerning the stranger, which is not of thy peo-"ple Israel, but is come from a far country, for thy "great name's sake, and thy mighty hand and thy stretch-"ed-out arm; if they come and pray in this house: "then hear thou from the heavens, thy dwelling place, "and do according to all that the stranger calleth to "thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy "name and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel."

Another great end God had in this wonderful erection of the Israelites, was to pave the way for Christianity, as the whole New Testament, particularly the determination of the apostolical synod at Jerusalem, and the demonstration of this in the epistle to the Hebrews, doth plainly shew. For the whole Mosaical law of rites and ceremonies was but a subservient institution made use of as a fence to the moral law contained in the ten commandments, which our Saviour sums up in love to God, and to our neighbour as ourselves, Matth. xxii. 37. assuring us that these were all that was material, moral, and of perpetual use, that the law and prophetical writings did contain. And even Moses himself tells the Israelites the same thing, when he represents the covenant between God and them to stand in the decalogue, Deut. iv. 12, 13. "For the Lord, (says he) spake to you

with

with an audible and articulate voice from Mount Sinai; (though without aſſuming any ſhape or ſimilitude, to prevent idolatry:) and the Lord declared thus unto you his covenant, even ten commandments, which he wrote upon two tables of ſtone." Whence the apoſtle ſpeaks of the Moſaical law, in a very contemptible manner, as to the ceremonial part of it, in regard of the Chriſtian inſtitution. For ſometimes he calls it the law of a carnal commandment, Heb. vii. 16. Sometimes he calls its ordinances beggarly rudiments, Gal. iv. 9. And elſewhere tells us plainly, that its inſtitutions were merely carnal or political, impoſed on the Jews until the inſtitution of Chriſtianity, which he calls the time of reformation, Heb. ix. 10. So that we could never give any ſatisfactory reaſon, why God did injoin thoſe antient rites with ſuch ſolemnity and ſtrictneſs, if we did not conſider them to be of a typical nature and inſtitution; relating to the heavenly diſpenſation of Chriſtianity, as dark yet ſignificant hieroglyphics or emblems thereof, in regard of which the law was the Jewiſh ſchool-maſter leading them unto, and pointing out unto them, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, Gal. iii. 24, 25. Whence we are aſſured, that the law was only a ſhadow of good things to come; but was not the true or perfect image of them, Heb. x. 1. So that there is as great a difference between Judaiſm and Chriſtianity, in relation to heaven and the perfection thereof; as there is between the dark ſhadow and curious image or picture of a man, or any other thing. Nay the apoſtle runs the difference yet higher, when he makes this ſuch as is between the ſhadow and body itſelf, Col. ii. 16, 17. For, ſays he, the Jewiſh ordinances, ſuch as their meats and drinks, their holy days, and their new-moons and ſabbaths, were all but a ſhadow of things to come; but the body (or ſubſtance,

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antitype and completion, to which all theſe referred) was of Chriſt, i. e. conſiſted of his actions and inſtitutions. And in like manner we are told, that the Aaronical prieſts did only ſerve unto the example and ſhadow of heavenly things, Heb. viii. 4, 5. Nay, I might ſhew further (were this a proper place for it) that the very periods of the Jewiſh diſpenſation were figurative of the Chriſtian: and that the illuſtrious men, that make the greateſt figure in the Old Teſtament hiſtory, were types of Chriſt, in ſome reſpect or other. Of David the caſe is ſo plain, (as well as of Moſes and Joſhua) that Chriſt is frequently propheſied of, even under his name, See Hoſ. iii. 5. Jer. xxx. 9. Ezek. xxxiv. 23. And he that conſiders the words and ſcope of the ſeventy ſecond pſalm, will not I ſuppoſe doubt but Solomon is to be looked upon as a type likewiſe. I might ſhew this at large, in relation both to the perſonal qualifications of theſe illuſtrious princes, and the character of their ſeveral governments: but theſe conſiderations would lead me out too far for an introduction. I ſhall therefore only take notice of this here, that both the Jewiſh church and ſtate was arrived to the higheſt ſtep and pitch in Solomon's time. For then was the Ark, the moſt eminent ſymbol of God's preſence with and dwelling among the Jews, taken from a portable habitation and moveable condition, and placed in a fixed houſe and moſt magnificent palace. Whence it came to paſs, that the temple and the ark became the moſt illuſtrious of all the types of Chriſt, as we ſhall afterwards have occaſion to obſerve further.

In this temple God is ſaid, as elſewhere, ſo here in our text, TO DWELL, or 'take up his habitation,' as the Syriac and Arabic verſions render it. And this

being the only word of the text that requires any critical ſurvey, it may not be amiſs to take ſome notice of it, before we come to explain the words doctrinally. The Hebrew word שכן ſignifies properly to ſit or reſt, to dwell or remain in any place, as an houſe or habitation. It is variouſly rendered by the Septuagint; ſometimes by οἰκεω, to dwell; ſometimes by ἐνοικεω, to dwell in a place; ſometimes by παροικεω, to dwell by or beſide one; and ſometimes alſo by καθημαι, ἐγκαθημαι, παρακαθημαι, συγκαθημαι, καθιζω, &c. But moſt frequently we find this word rendered by κατοικεω, which as it ſignifies ſometimes ſimply to DWELL, ſo at other times denotes ones dwelling in a place, as one that hath a property in the ſame, (even as a man does that dwells in his own houſe as the PATER-FAMILIAS or maſter of the houſe and father of the family does), and not as a lodger that has no proper right to it. Of both which ſenſes they that pleaſe may obſerve examples in our beſt Lexicons.

Now I ſuppoſe it is in this moſt proper ſenſe, that God is ſaid to dwell with the Jews, in Jeruſalem, in Sion, in the temple, and in the mercy-ſeat above the ark, or between the cherubims. For he did ſo dwell there, as no-where elſe in this lower world. But yet we muſt not ſuppoſe that God is ſaid to dwell in the temple and among the Jews, excluſively to the reſt of the world. For God is ſaid to dwell elſewhere in a more common ſenſe: for which I might adduce many ſcriptural expreſſions. But I ſhall reſtrict myſelf at this time to two. And the firſt is that place, where God is ſaid to dwell in the deluge or in the ſea; or, as we tranſlate it, "He ſitteth upon the flood," Pſal. xxix. 10. But the word which we render there to ſit, is the ſame both in the Hebrew and in the Verſion of the Seventy

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with the word of our text. Which beſt agrees with the reſt of the Pſalm, where the thunder is called the voice of God, and is deſcribed as a demonſtration of God's dwelling in the elementary world, as King of the univerſe. And indeed the three laſt verſes of that Pſalm diſcover to us both the more ſpecial dwelling of God in the temple, and the more general ſenſe of his dwelling in the world. "In his temple (ſays the Pſalmiſt) doth every one ſpeak of his glory," ver. 9. For there he doth in a peculiar manner diſcover and manifeſt himſelf. But that we may not imagine that God has confined his abode among men to that one place, he adds, ver. 10. "The Lord dwelleth in (or upon) the deluge; yea, the Lord ſitteth King for ever." For the clouds above, and the waters in them, and the ſea below, and, in a word, the whole world, is the temple where God manifeſts his power. And though he be ſpecially King of the Jews, and thoſe that own and ſerve him; ſeeing, in a peculiar ſenſe, "The Lord will give ſtrength unto his people, and bleſs them with peace:" Yet we are not to imagine that God's being ſaid to dwell in the temple is excluſive altogether of his dwelling in the other parts of the world; no more than we can ſay, that God's being King of the Jews, excludes him from being King over the other nations of the earth, though in another ſenſe. For if we were thus to interpret the words of Scripture, we muſt alſo ſay, that becauſe God is ſaid to dwell in heaven above, therefore in no ſenſe he can be ſaid to dwell in this world among men. But God himſelf has told us, that though the heaven be his throne, where he is ſaid to manifeſt his glory chiefly, yet the earth is his footſtool, where he leaves veſtiges of himſelf, Iſa. lxi. 1, 2.

Another place to this purpoſe is, where God is ſaid, according to our verſion, to ſit upon the circle of the earth; the inhabitants whereof are but as graſhoppers before him: and that he ſtretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and ſpreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in, Iſa. xl. 25. But our tranſlators had at leaſt as good reaſon to render the Hebrew word TO DWELL, in the beginning of the verſe, as they have done in the end of it. For the original word here, is the ſame that is tranſlated THUS in our text. And, beſides, the whole ſcope of the chapter leads us in to underſtand the prophet's words after this manner. For the context is a magnificent and elegant account of the glory of God, taken from his creating and governing the world. From whence the Prophet expreſſes the folly of thoſe that thought to repreſent God by ſtatues and images. What, ſays he, have ye not heard, have ye not known, hath it not been told you, that the great God cannot be pictured, nor confined to any ſpot of this world? For why, He is infinitely greater than the whole world. But if he may be ſaid to dwell in any place, it is every-where. For he dwells upon the circle or whole ſpherical circumference of this earth, and among all its inhabitants, though they be but as graſhoppers in his ſight, ~~which hop up and down upon its ſuperfice.~~ But neither is he confined to this little terraqueous globe; for he dwells above alſo in the celeſtial regions, having ſtretched them forth as a tent to dwell in. So that it is plain here, that God is ſaid to dwell, not only in the temple and among the Jews, but, every-where alſo in the whole world. And therefore, immediately after theſe words, the Prophet gives us an account of ſome effects of his government of the world, as evidences of his dwelling upon it as the rightful, powerful, and juſt King thereof. For,

ſays

ſays Iſaiah, Ver. 23, &c. He bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. He bringeth out all the hoſts of created things by number, calling them all by names; making them to ſerve the purpoſes for which he made them. He gives power to the faint. And as he gives the young men and the ſtrong, frequent proofs of their own weakneſs: ſo he gives his own faithful ſervants many evidences of his tenderneſs and kindneſs, as well as of his power, in ſupporting them.

This, therefore, and the like phraſes, as they are to be underſtood in a comparative ſenſe; ſo to underſtand the meaning of this expreſſion, we muſt ſtrip it of its metaphor. For DWELLING is not only attributed to perſons, but to virtues or other things. Thus the Scripture tells us, That in the days of Chriſt, judgment ſhould dwell in the wilderneſs, and righteouſneſs remain in the fruitful fields, Iſa. xxxii. 16. Where it is plain that the dwelling of judgment muſt import no more, but the diſcovery of it, and the faithful execution or practice thereof. So that when God is ſaid to dwell in any place, nothing elſe can be underſtood, but his manifeſting himſelf, in the continued acts of his providence and care, in a way of power, juſtice or kindneſs.

Thus he is ſaid to dwell upon the flood, and upon the circle of the earth, in as far as he manifeſts his government of this lower world by his providence, Pſal. xxix. 10. Iſa. xl. 22. For this kingdom of his, ruleth over all, Pſal. cxiii. 19. And this way, and by his works of creation, he makes known his eternal power and Godhead, Rom. i. 20. For he leaves not himſelf without a witneſs even among the Heathens

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and Barbarians: For in him all things live, and move, and have their being, Acts xiv. 17. xvii. 28.

But in a more ſpecial ſenſe he is ſaid to have dwelt among the Jews, as I have already obſerved, eſpecially after the temple was built. For then and there it was, that he gave more conſpicuous diſcoveries of himſelf than to all the world beſides. Now it is remarkable, that God ſpeaks of his dwelling in the temple, in ſuch a manner, as if he had not dwelt in any place before. For, when David tells Nathan, that he intended to build a houſe for God to dwell in; the Lord ſpeaks to the prophet thus: "Go tell my ſervant David, Thus ſays the Lord, Shalt thou build me a houſe for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any houſe, ſince the time I brought the children of Iſrael out of Egypt, but have walked in a tent and tabernacle," &c. 2 Sam. vii. 5. And yet it cannot be ſuppoſed, that God, in no ſenſe, dwelt in the tabernacle, and among Iſrael, before the building of the temple. For God had not only aſſured the Iſraelites, that in all places where he ſhould record his name, he would come unto them and bleſs them; but he had alſo told them, that the deſign of making the ſanctuary and the tabernacle was, that he might dwell among them, Exod. xx. 24. xxv. 8, 9. Only in a more peculiar ſenſe he is ſaid to have dwelt in the temple than in the tabernacle, upon the account of its being a more fixed and permanent place of abode. Whence we ſee, that a more eminent ſenſe of a word muſt not be taken as excluſive of other acceptations and accommodations of the ſame.

For we muſt remember, that God is ſaid to dwell in heaven in a more peculiar ſenſe, than ever he dwelt

in

in the temple; ſeeing there he manifeſts his glory in a far more wonderful and excellent manner than all that with which he filled the temple of old. Therefore Solomon, in the words of our text, is raviſhed with wonder, to think that, ſeeing the heavens could not contain God, he ſhould yet condeſcend, in any ſenſe, to dwell with men on the earth, and in the temple he had made. And, therefore, St. Stephen ſpeaks after this manner to the Jews, who boaſted of their temple, as if God had confined his preſence to them and it. "It is true (ſays he), Solomon built God a houſe. "Howbeit the Moſt High dwelleth not in temples "made with hands; as ſaith the Prophet, Heaven is "my throne, and earth is my footſtool: What houſe "then will ye build me, ſaith the Lord? Or what is "the place of my reſt? Hath not my hand made all "theſe things?" Acts vii. 47, 48, &c. Iſa. lxvi. 1.

And, ſurely, if God was ſaid to dwell in the temple and among the Jews of old, we have juſt reaſon to believe that he does ſo in the Chriſtian Church. For though we ſhould not be able to give inſtances, where this word Dwelling is uſed in this ſenſe; yet if we find the thing itſelf aſſerted in other ways of ſpeaking, it is enough to us. Now, I ſuppoſe, we will grant, that in what place ſoever we come to worſhip, ſome object of adoration is ſuppoſed to be there. And I think that the woman of Samaria and our Saviour both, ſuppoſe this, when they diſcourſe of God's being worſhipped in the temples of Samaria and Jeruſalem, John iv. 20, 21, &c. For a temple without relation to a deity dwelling in it, is a contradiction in the ſenſe both of Jews and Pagans. Now, ſays our Saviour to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, when neither

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in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, ſhall any worſhip the Father." And yet I muſt tell you, ſays he, that there is no compariſon to be made between your temple and that at Jeruſalem, ſeeing God never owned your temple as he has done that; neither can ye ever prove that God dwelt in your temple, as we know he has done in the other. Howéver, ſays he, the time is coming, when he will not confine his abode (in ſuch a manner as he did to the Jewiſh temple of old) to any particular places. But where-ever there are ſpiritual and true worſhippers of God, there will he manifeſt himſelf. And if, therefore, God ſend his ordinances any-where, and have true worſhippers, we may juſtly ſay, that God dwells in that place. For if Satan be ſaid to dwell where he prevails and has many ſervants (Rev. ii. 13.): Why may we not, upon the ſame reaſon, ſay, that God dwells in the church and among his people; eſpecially when we remember that the church is called an houſe and holy temple of the Lord, built up for an habitation of God through the Spirit? Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22. And, ſurely, if where Chriſt is, by his Spirit, God may juſtly be ſaid to dwell; we are aſſured that God dwells in the Chriſtian Church, where his ordinances are: for he has promiſed to be with his ſervants, even to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20. And this is ſo certain, that he has told us, That where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be alſo in the midſt of them, Mat. xviii. 20.

But I confeſs there is a higher acceptation of God's dwelling, than all theſe I have mentioned, when this phraſe is uſed in relation to Chriſt. For the word is taken ſometimes in this moſt peculiar and proper ſenſe; when we are told, That all the fulneſs of the Godhead

dwells

dwells in him bodily; or ſubſtantially; (Col. ii. 9.) and not in a figurative ſenſe; in which ſenſe, more or leſs, he is ſaid to dwell in the world, in the temple, in the church, and in heaven. "For it hath pleaſed the Father, that in this Saviour all fulneſs ſhould dwell," Col. i. 19.

And as God is ſaid to dwell in Chriſt, ſo is He and Chriſt ſaid to dwell in holy perſons, though in a figurative ſenſe. For our Saviour tells us, that if any man love him, he will manifeſt himſelf unto him; and that his Father and He will come unto him, and make their abode with him, John xiv. 21. 23. Therefore ſays he, "Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and ſup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. For Chriſt is ſaid to dwell in the hearts of true Chriſtians by faith, Eph. iii. 17.

Thus having ſhewed how variouſly God's dwelling in a place is uſed, that we may have liberty to accommodate this phraſe to ſeveral purpoſes afterwards, as our ſubject may require: I now return to the conſideration of this, which our text doth more immediately furniſh us with. Let us therefore call to mind, that the temple was the moſt illuſtrious type of Chriſt, of any we know. For it was the only place of God's public reſidence among the Jews, as King of that people, towards which they were to pray, in which all ſacrifices and oblations were offered up, whence he gave his commands and iſſued forth his edicts, where he returned anſwers to the people, and where he was conſulted for that purpoſe; and, in a word, where he manifeſted his preſence and revealed his will: It having been agreed

upon before between God and that people, that this place ſhould be thus ſet apart and dedicated for all theſe ends, until Chriſt himſelf, the fulneſs of all, ſhould come into his own temple. For which purpoſes, after God had allowed Solomon to build that houſe, when it came to be finiſhed, he and all the people do jointly agree to conſecrate the ſame to God in a moſt ſolemn manner. In which work Solomon ſpeaks firſt, as the mouth of God, to the whole nation, acting as his delegate or herald, as we ſee here from ver. 1,—11. incluſive. And then he acts as the repreſentative of the people to God, in that moſt admirable addreſs and prayer he puts up, from ver. 12. to the end of this chapter. And God, upon the other hand, doth ſolemnly ratify all that Solomon and the people did and prayed for, by conſuming the ſacrifice with heavenly fire, and filling the whole houſe with divine glory; confirming thus the covenant, on his part, as we ſee in the beginning of the ſeventh chapter. Upon which Solomon and the people return their acknowledgment and thanks to their great King, by numerous and coſtly ſacrifices, and keep ſeven days in ſolemn feaſting, with joy and gladneſs, as we ſee, chap. vii. ver. 4,—7. After all which ſolemnity, God concludes the whole work, by giving a diſtinct anſwer to Solomon's prayer in a dream or night-viſion. In which he ſhews his acceptance of this dedicatory addreſs, and upon what conditions he does ſo; annexing promiſes to them upon ſuppoſition of their obedience, and threatenings in caſe they turned rebels againſt him. Of all which, we have an account in the next chapter, from ver. 12. to the end. But if we deſire a more exact knowledge of this memorable tranſaction, we may compare this account of it, with that which is given us in the Firſt Book of Kings, the eighth and ninth chapters.

But

But it is time I ſhould now proceed to the direct conſideration of theſe words, which I have read. And ſeeing there is no material difference to be found among the ſeveral copies and verſions of greateſt authority with learned men, as to various readings: I ſhall not trouble you further with any thing relating to the verbal interpretation of the text, but proceed to conſider the meaning and ſenſe thereof. And this I ſuppoſe cannot be in the dark to any that will attentively conſider what I have already ſaid by way of preliminary conſiderations: eſpecially, if he do not only remember the work that Solomon and the Jews are about, but read with attention this dedicatory addreſs and prayer to God, of which our text makes a part.

Let us therefore premiſe this one thing further, and give you the ſum and ſcope of this admirable prayer, in a ſhort paraphraſe.

"O Lord our God, (ſays Solomon,) How happy is
"this people of Iſrael, who have thee to be their God
"and King? in compariſon of whom, nay beſides whom
"there is no God, either in heaven or earth. Who,
"notwithſtanding thy glory and greatneſs, art pleaſed
"thus to enter into ſpecial covenant with us thy ſer-
"vants, ſhewing mercy unto us, and accepting of our
"ſervices, when they are ſincere, though poor and im-
"perfect. Therefore it is, O our God and Sovereign,
"that I am emboldened to deſire and hope that thou
"wilt fulfil what thou did promiſe to David my father,
"aſſuring him that his houſe and throne ſhould remain
"for ever, upon condition that his children ſhould con-
"tinue to obey thy law. Now then, O Lord God of

" Iſrael, let thy word be verified, which thou haſt ſpoken
" to thy ſervant David.

" But while I talk of this, I am wrapt up in wonder
" and amazement! Is it then ſo indeed! Is it true!
" Is it certain! Nay, is it poſſible! That God can con-
" deſcend ſo far, as to dwell after this manner with men
" on the earth, or allow them to converſe with, and
" worſhip him, by ſo near an approach, and in immedi-
" ate acts of adoration and ſervice! What, is it poſſible
" that it ſhould be thus? When lo! the heaven, even
" the higheſt and moſt glorious heaven cannot contain
" thee, nor be looked upon as a ſufficient temple or
" palace for thee to dwell in, or be ſuppoſed worthy of
" ſo great an inhabitant! Is it then to be conceived that
" this houſe, built by one of thy finite and imperfect
" creatures here below, can be honoured with thy pre-
" ſence and reſidence, or be accepted by thee as the
" chief ſeat of thy empire over us?

" But yet, O Lord, ſeeing we have done the beſt we
" could, lo, here thy poor ſervant doth proſtrate him-
" ſelf before thee, in the name, and as the mouth of
" this thy people; and, encouraged by thy promiſe to
" to David my father, doth humbly beſeech thee to
" come thyſelf into this temple; whither the ark, the
" ſymbol of thy preſence, is already brought. Come
" therefore thyſelf hither alſo, and let thine eyes be ever
" open upon this place; and thy name, and what thou
" makeſt thyſelf known by, be continually in it; that ſo
" the pledges and evidences of thy preſence and love
" may never be wanting here, but that thine ears may
" ever be found to be open to the prayers of thy peo-

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" ple in or towards this houſe, as the viſible place of
" thy reſidence among us."

" Whatever then be the caſe of thy people, let them
" be heard, accepted and ſuccoured, upon their ſincere
" and humble ſupplications unto thee: Whether this be
" a matter of juſtice between man and man, in dark
" and intricate caſes, which cannot be determined in an
" ordinary way; or a matter of public ſafety, when
" their enemies are like to be hard for them, upon the
" account of thy deſertion of them for their ſins: Or
" when thou haſt puniſhed them by famine, peſtilence,
" or any other calamity. And let not theſe favours be
" confined to native Iſraelites; but let them be extend-
" ed alſo to ſtrangers that ſhall come here to worſhip
" and ſerve thee, in oppoſition to all falſe gods and ways
" of worſhip. That thus the heathen nations may be
" allured and engaged to fall in with thy ſervice, and
" that the whole world may ſee thy glory. And do
" thou act, O Lord, as the king and general of thy
" people, when they are engaged in a lawful war
" againſt thine and their enemies; that through thy
" conduct and aſſiſtance they may be victorious over
" them. But if they ſhall deſert thy ways, and there-
" fore juſtly provoke thee to deſert them, ſo that they
" be led into captivity by their enemies; yet be thou ſo
" kind and merciful as to appear again for their deli-
" verance upon their unfeigned repentance, reforma-
" tion and returning to thee and their duty.

" Now in all theſe reſpects be thou gracious to hear
" and accept this people. For which end let this place
" be under thy ſpecial care: As an evidence of which,
" do thou now enter into this thy habitation among us,

" now

" now that the ark, the ſymbol and monument of thy " preſence and power, is brought in, which we have " therefore placed in the inmoſt and moſt excellent part " of this ſtructure. As a ſign therefore of thy hearing " and anſwering this our prayer, pour down, we beſeech " thee, a ſpirit of ſanctification, zeal and joy, on all thy " prieſts and people: and let thy glory fill this whole " houſe as a pledge of all this. Hear us, O our God, " in all theſe things, for thy mercy's ſake, that I thy " anointed ſervant (the type of the true anointed One) " may not be confounded, nor thy promiſe to David " my father fall ſhort, any way, of its due and full " accompliſhment."

This brief account of Solomon's prayer, and particularly that of our text, by way of paraphraſe, may ſerve, I hope, to let in our minds plainly enough into the ſenſe and ſcope of theſe words, as to the general import of them. And though our text be indeed a kind of digreſſion from the reſt of the prayer, and comes in therefore by way of parentheſis here: Yet it is ſo natural a one, that it may juſtly be looked upon as a very material part of this ſolemn addreſs. For without this we might have looked on it as defective in ſome ſort; this being ſo expreſſive of the ſenſe this wiſe man had of the wonderfulneſs of God's condeſcenſion to men in general, and to Iſrael and himſelf more ſpecially and peculiarly. But it is now high time to put an end to this introductory part, and to proceed more immediately to conſider our text.

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The DISCOURSE itſelf.

AFTER all I have ſaid, to lay the foundation of our diſcourſe, and to introduce our minds into the right underſtanding of this text; I come now to raiſe the ſuperſtructure, by a more exact and particular enquiry into, and conſideration of thoſe things which are here propoſed to our meditation. Therefore having given you a general account of our text in the preceding paraphraſe, I hope it will be eaſy to perceive that theſe words conſiſt of three parts. For in the firſt place Solomon, in this his exclamatory digreſſion, and parentheſis, falls into a kind of ecſtatical rapture, by way of wonder, how it was poſſible or conceivable, that God ſhould dwell with men on the earth. And then he proceeds, ſecondly, to give the reaſon of this his admiration, taken from the conſideration of the divine immenſity. Where he lays a foundation alſo, as to the right conception of the way and manner of God's dwelling with men on earth: ſeeing we muſt conceive of this agreeably to the immenſity, and other infinite perfections of God. From both which conſiderations he proceeds, in the third place, to admire how the immenſe and infinite God could condeſcend or find it poſſible for him to dwell in the houſe which he had built. Wherein notwithſtanding he plainly ſuppoſeth it to be the duty of men to build convenient places for the ſervice and worſhip of God; when God is ſo kind and condeſcending, as to declare his readineſs and willingneſs to dwell with them, even here below.

So

So that from theſe three parts of the text, we are led to the conſideration of as many doctrinal propoſitions, in which all that is material in the words is contained; which therefore we are to conſider accordingly and which are theſe following.

Firſt, That it is indeed a truth, but a moſt aſtoniſhing and wonderful one, that God doth dwell with men on the earth.

Secondly, That the conſideration of the divine immenſity, as it is moſt wonderful in itſelf, ſo ſerves not only to raiſe our thoughts to admire that God ſhould ever condeſcend to dwell with ſinful men on earth, but alſo to rectify our apprehenſion how and in what manner God can be ſaid to dwell with them, particularly in houſes made with hands.

Thirdly, That how aſtoniſhing ſoever it be, that God doth dwell with men upon earth, yet ſeeing God is pleaſed to condeſcend ſo far as to do ſo for our good; all men ought to reckon themſelves obliged to do what they can, both to build and maintain convenient places for his ſervice and worſhip, and to do beſide what they are able, that God may dwell among them.

I. PROPOSITION.

It is indeed a truth, but a moſt aſtoniſhing and wonderful one, that God doth dwell with men on the earth.

I cannot believe that ye can poſſibly doubt of this aſſertion, or think it needs any further proof than what has been ſaid. But if any ſhould deſire more, I refer them to the conſideration of their Bible, both as to the hiſtorical, and the promiſſory, and prophetical part thereof.

For if we conſider the hiſtorical part, nothing is more plain than this, that God never deſerted the earth, nor ever wanted a church and people, to ſerve him there. Though the account we have of the ante-diluvian world be ſhort and obſcure, yet we find that the knowledge and worſhip of God was kept up then, from Adam and Abel down to Noah and his ſons. And Enoch was not the only perſon who walked and converſed with God then: though he was the only man, ſo far as we hear, that was privileged with being tranſlated. And after the flood, though idolatry and wickedneſs ſoon began to over-run the world; yet we find God took effectual care by the means of Noah, Shem, Abraham and others, to keep up the memorial of himſelf. And though Abraham's family and poſterity were peculiarly bleſt by God, with his paternal care; yet the account of Job and his friends lets us ſee, that God dwelt in other places as well as with them. Nay the apoſtle aſſures us, notwithſtanding the peculiar privilege of the Iſraelites above the reſt of the world, Acts xiv. 17. that God left not him-

ſelf without witneſs among the poor Pagans, ſeeing he did them good, and gave them food and raiment, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling their hearts with joy and gladneſs; preaching to them by traditional conveyances of truth, and by the dictates of their own reaſon, Heb. xi. 6. that God was, and that he was the rewarder of them that diligently fought him, and the puniſher of the workers of iniquity. So that, if when they knew God, they did not worſhip him as God, the fault was their own. But as for the Iſraelites, to them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. ii. 2. So that if we run thro' the hiſtory of that nation, we may eaſily ſee what pains God took to keep up the knowledge of himſelf among them. He that reads the Pſalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, the writings of the prophets, and after them the Apocryphal ones, will ſufficiently perceive that God ſtill dwelt among them, and never deſerted them altogether. And if after all this, we deſcend to the moſt illuſtrious period, when Chriſt appeared, and the Gentile nations began to have the goſpel-light dawn upon them, which the apoſtle calls the fulneſs of time, Gal. iv. 4. and Eph. i. 10. we cannot but perceive, that God did never totally abandon the world, even as to the true and ſaving knowledge of his truths; far leſs left off his government of it, as the ſupreme ruler thereof. For here it pleaſed God to draw the ſeemingly ſcattered lines of his former providences to a center; by conveying the various ſtreams of the law of nature and improvements of reaſon (that had creeped through the muddy regions of the world, in various meanders) to this one great ocean of goſpel-revelation, into which he made them diſembogue and empty themſelves; and by which theſe (ſeparated from the purulent ſtreams that mixed with them be-

before), as well as the greater and nobler river which run through Judea, came to be ſwallowed up.

And as the hiſtorical part of the Bible ſhews us that God has ever dwelt with men upon the earth: So the prophetical and promiſſory part aſſure us he ever will do ſo. His promiſes give us to know, that he will ever have a generation to ſeek and ſerve him, Pſal. cxlv. 4. and that he will be with them, even unto the end of the world, Matth. xxviii. 20.; and that whatever attempts are made to extirpate the church, yet the gates of hell ſhall never prevail againſt it, Matth. xvi. 18. And the prophetical part furniſheth us with a graphical and exact, though often enigmatical and figurative, deſcription of the church's trial and conflicts, ſucceſs and victories: ſo that, though ſometimes it may ſeem to be cut off, yet it ſhall revive again: yea, when at laſt the city of God comes to be beſieged and almoſt taken, Rev. xx. 9. it ſhall be not only preſerved, but ſee its enemies totally cut off, even as Jeruſalem was in Hezekiah's time; which therefore may be looked upon as an emblem, if not type alſo, of the laſt deſtruction of the inſulting enemies of the church of Chriſt.

And ſurely if ever God dwelt with men on the earth, he has done it ſince the laſt ſpreading of the goſpel. For though Antichriſtianiſm did almoſt eclipſe the truth for ſome ages before the reformation, yet he never left his church without witneſſes againſt theſe evils, until at length he ſpread the light of primitive Chriſtianity thro' the world once more: So that theſe two laſt centuries have, in my opinion, out-ſhone all former ages, excepting the firſt three, and have perhaps fallen ſhort only of the firſt of theſe. And I know not that any nation was

ever more happy in having the preſence of God among them, than theſe three kingdoms have been, ſince they were bleſt with reformed Chriſtianity. So that, if God was ſaid to dwell among the Jews, under that dark and ſhadowy diſpenſation; we have juſt reaſon to reckon he does ſo among us, though in a more ſpiritual and leſs political manner, adapted to the nature and deſign of the New Teſtament economy. Have we not reaſon thus to judge of ourſelves? We, I ſay, who have the Oracles of God in our own language; who have the ordinances of God ſo purely diſpenſed; and the deſign and parts of the goſpel-revelation ſo clearly diſcovered, ſo demonſtrably proved, and ſo evidently vindicated: We, who have the offers of ſalvation ſo often and fervently made us; who have the bleſſings and privileges of the Chriſtian religion ſo excellently deſcribed, and our duty and intereſt ſo pathetically and ſtrongly urged and laid home to us? Beſides all this, have we not ſeen God taking to himſelf his great power, for our defence? Has not he reſcued us from thoſe miſeries we had involved ourſelves in, within our own memory? And may we not ſee then, that in innumerable inſtances, he has acted as our king and ruler, for our defence and ſecurity? Nay, notwithſtanding our degeneracy, bleſſed be God that he has left us yet many that have not bowed down to Baal, nor defiled their garments; in whom therefore we may conclude God dwells, making them living temples of the Holy Ghoſt, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. as the ſcripture tells us good men, in a ſpiritual ſenſe, really are. So that we may, with a little reflection on the hiſtory of theſe nations, find all thoſe particulars of Solomon's prayer (as I paraphraſed them above) verified in our own caſe. For as we did engage ourſelves to God and our Saviour, upon our falling off from the Romiſh

Romiſh Babylon, when we reformed from thence: So we may obſerve God's government over us, to have been various, according to our behaviour towards him. When we were guilty of national apoſtacies, we have been puniſhed by peſtilence, fire, perſecutions, and civil wars: but upon our repentance, God has ſtood by us again, and delivered us from all theſe calamities, even when perhaps there was, with many, more of form than ſincerity in it.

From all theſe things therefore I ſuppoſe it doth ſufficiently appear, that what I have aſſerted in the propoſition is certain and true. And therefore I ſhall now proceed to conſider and explain this truth doctrinally, having premiſed already what is ſufficient, I hope, to clear up the meaning of Solomon's words as to their literal ſenſe, and thereby laid a foundation for our further meditations upon this great ſubject.

That God's dwelling with men upon earth, doth neceſſarily ſuppoſe his exiſtence, is ſo very obvious, as hardly to need our obſerving or mentioning it here. For we can no more avoid this ſuppoſition, than forget that men, with whom he is ſaid to dwell, are ſuppoſed to have a being. And therefore our Lord had juſt reaſon to tell the Sadduces, Matth. xxii. 31, 32. that he could not but wonder that they ſhould own that God was the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and yet look upon them as not exiſting; ſeeing it was not poſſible that God could be the God of the dead, who were incapable of communion with him. Whence, as he infers the reſurrection of the Patriarchs, ſo he as plainly ſuppoſeth their real exiſtence, as to their ſouls, in another ſtate. Therefore I hope I need as little digreſs here to prove to this audi-

auditory, that God is, as ſpend time to demonſtrate that we ourſelves are real and not imaginary beings. For I hope there are none here capable of that degeneracy, as to be more liable to Atheiſm or Scepticiſm this way, than the antient Pagans themſelves were; among the wiſeſt of whom it was a matter of diſpute, whether ſuch a monſter as a ſpeculative Athieſt did ever really exiſt, See Cicero de Nat. Deorum. Maxim. Tyr. Diſſ. For though ſome were called ſo, upon the account of their deriding the Pagan deities, or by reaſon of their looſe expreſſions that way, or their diſſolute lives; yet we read not of any that could be juſtly charged with this as their fixed ſentiment. Therefore even the great champion of the Pyrrhonians tells us, that Theodorus and Protagoras Abderitanus, and others denied only the exiſtence of the Demons, whom the Pagans worſhipped as gods, and that too in a doubtful way of ſpeaking; Sext. Empiricus adverſus Mathem. Lib. 8. p. 319. A. B. For the words for which Protagoras was cenſured and reputed an Athieſt, had relation to the Pagan Demons, or deified ſpirits, and were no more than theſe. I am able to determine nothing concerning the gods, whether they do indeed exiſt, or (if they do) what they are: for many things deter me from meddling with this ſubject. And in this ſenſe alſo it was only that Epicurus himſelf was an Atheiſt. For, ſays the ſame author; Epicurus only denied God, as to the opinion that the common people have of him, Ibid. p. 319. D. Nay the author himſelf, after all his ſceptical arguments, or rather Sophiſms on this head, does affirm, That all men agree in the common notion of God's Being, though not in the ſame way and manner, Ib. p. 314 A. Yea, he ſticks not to ſay further, That the notion of the Being of God ever was, and ſhall remain to eternity, ſeeing

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the things that are done do conſtantly declare this, and are a perpetual teſtimony of it, Ib. p. 320. B.

The exiſtence of God therefore being neceſſarily ſuppoſed here, we do immediately perceive that the thing which this aſſertion, of God's dwelling with men, doth more immediately denote or lead us up to, is, That God is capable of converſe with men, and they capable of converſe with him. For ſeeing dwelling is in order to communication and converſe, without which the dwelling of one with another is unintelligible, as being a ſound without any ſignification: And ſeeing therefore dwelling and converſe is not conceivable in the notion thereof, otherwiſe than in a ſenſe that denotes reciprocalneſs: Hence we are led unavoidably to conclude, that as God's dwelling among men ſuppoſeth his converſableneſs, as to them; ſo alſo their converſableneſs, in relation to him. For it is plain that the word dwelling, and to dwell one with another, is a phraſe borrowed from the cohabitation of men here on earth, who live together in houſes and cities, as ſociable as well as reaſonable creatures. But as this word doth ſuppoſe mutual converſe and communion between God and men; ſo we muſt remember that we are to conceive of it in a way decorous and congruous to the vaſtly different characters of the infinitely perfect and ſovereign Being, and ſuch poor minute creatures as we are; that thus we may think of this, in a rational and ſpiritual way, without allowing ourſelves the liberty of any groſs or vain imaginations of this glorious truth.

Now having ſeen what God's dwelling with men on the earth doth ſuppoſe, I come to conſider our propoſition more directly; by an enquiry into theſe two things there-

therein expreſt, viz. The truth itſelf aſſerted, That God doth indeed dwell with men on the earth; and the wonderfulneſs of his doing ſo.

As to the firſt of theſe, having already ſaid enough to evince the certainty of it, I have now only this one thing further to conſider, viz. How and in what way we are to conceive of this. And here I muſt premiſe one thing, which will direct our thoughts and meditations upon this head; that though we are not to limit our diſcourſe to the particular way of God's dwelling in the tabernacle and temple, with the Jews of old; but rather to the manner of his dwelling in the world, and in the church, and in good men now under the goſpel, in order to adapt this truth to ourſelves, for which I have already laid a ſufficient foundation: Yet the general conſideration of the manner of God's dwelling among the Iſraelites of old, muſt be the thing we are to make uſe of, in order to the regulation of our thoughts, in treating of this ſubject. Now nothing is more clear and agreed upon by all, than this; * That God dwelt among

* It ſeems very probable to me, that God being ſpoken of ſo much under the name of Melec or King, among the Jews, might give occaſion to the Heathens to call him ſo too. For as the God of the Ammonites was called Molec; ſo one of the moſt ancient names the Grecians gave him was that of Μειλιχιος. And becauſe God being the chief good is kind and bountiful to men: hence perhaps it might come to be uſed adjectively afterwards, to denote one that is mild and peaceable; as the ſubſtantive μειλιχια, to ſignify gentleneſs, kindneſs, &c. This I think more probable, than that from theſe this name was given to God; tho' Plutarch (ignorant of Hebrew) was of that opinion. However that God was antiently known by this name among the Grecians, the ſame author is a ſufficient witneſs, in his treatiſe De Ira Cohibenda, p. 458. B. And not only he, but ſeveral other authors make mention of God under the name of Jupiter Meilichius (i. e. Jehova Melec) to whom the Athenians offered up no ſacrifices, but only the fruits of the ground. See Pauſanias in Attic. & Corinth. And Phurnutus de Nat. Deorum. Thucidides alſo and Xenophon make mention of this.

among the Jews, as King over his own ſubjects. And therefore we muſt conclude, that he does ſo in relation to men ſtill, eſpecially with reſpect to us Chriſtians. For though the Jews were his ſubjects, in a peculiar manner ſo as no other people ever were: yet we are now his ſubjects as really as they were. And if Chriſtian nations are not the ſubjects of God in ſuch a political ſenſe as they; yet ſtill they are ſo in a more ſpiritual and refined ſenſe. For if this were not, we could give no reaſon why the New-Teſtament œconomy is ſo frequently and peculiarly called the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven, as we find it is. So that hence it is plain, that God's dwelling among men, (ſeeing he doth ſo as their king and ſupreme ruler) and his erecting his kingdom among them and over them, muſt of neceſſity be looked upon as ſynonimous phraſes, and of the ſame ſignification and import. And therefore, as God's kingdom over men in the world is properly twofold, viz. the kingdom of his common providence, and the kingdom of his ſpecial providence, or of his grace: So alſo God's dwelling with men upon the earth muſt be underſtood, either in a more general ſenſe, with relation to his government over men as ſuch, or in a peculiar and limited acceptation, denoting his governing Chriſtians by the laws of the goſpel, eſpecially thoſe that are truly ſuch.

Therefore, firſt, God may be ſaid to dwell with men on the earth, in as far as he rules them by the ſcepter of his ordinary providence: For, as the apoſtle tells the Athenians, "He is not far from every one of us; ſeeing in him all men live, and move, and have their being," Acts xvii. 28. All things do indeed ſubſiſt by God, and have their being in him as well as men.

But yet ſeeing the title of King ſpeaks a relation to perſons, capable of a reaſonable and moral government; it is very improper to call God's providence over inanimate, vegetative, and ſenſitive creatures, by the deſignation of a kingdom (as ſome learned * Heathens thought it was alſo, to call God the father of ſuch, ſeeing the title of Father is more than that of Creator), unleſs we conſider theſe accidentally, in as far as they have ſome relation to men: and therefore I think ſome ſyſtems ought to be purged from ſuch theological ſoleciſms. But to return; God dwells in the world among men, as their king and ſovereign, in as far as he rules men, and all things relating to them, by his univerſal providence. And this is managed and carried on in theſe three great ſteps, or by theſe three things.

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1. By his protecting and caring for the race of men, and all the individuals of this vaſt family: whence he condeſcends to allow of the character of Preſerver of men: For it is he that diſpoſes of men, and provides for them, as he ſees moſt convenient, over-ruling all their deſigns and actions, and all the events of theſe, and limiting them as to their ſeveral ſtations and ſervices; ſo that nothing falls out without his direction. But, though natural cauſes work neceſſarily, and ſenſitive creatures move by ſenſe or inſtinct, and reaſonable

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* Plutarch commends Homer for making a difference between the notion of God, as Father, and as Creator. For ſays he, God is the Father of angels (whom he calls Θεοι γενητοι, created gods, or gods born; which is not ſtrange, ſeeing the ſcripture calls them the ſons of God) and of men; but the Creator only of beaſts and inanimate creatures. For it is very improper to ſay that he that owns the land and ſows it, is therefore the father either of it, or of the fruits thereof. Plutarch. Platonicæ Queſt. p. 1000. E.

and free agents act voluntarily, and many things fall out to us casually: Yet all these are under the conduct of a wise and steady providence, and made use of to subserve the great Rector of the world, in carrying on his noble purposes: For he ruleth by his power for ever, and his eyes behold the nations, Psal. lxvi. 7.; and under this his kingdom (as even * the Heathens acknowledged) all things are, Psal. ciii. 10.

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2. God evidenceth his dwelling thus among men as king, and carries on this universal kingdom, by giving men laws. For whatever way God takes to promulgate these in the world, whether by innate ideas, or by sensation and reflection; yet still it is evident, that mankind generally have agreed in the belief of the Being of a God, and acknowledged an essential difference between virtue and vice, and lived in the expectation of fu-

* I might take notice of a great many sayings of such authors to this purpose. But I shall only mention two expressions. The first is Aratus, in Phaenomenis.

Ἐκ Διος ἀρχωμεθα, ϕ ὐδεποτ' ανδρες εωμεν
Ἀρρητον. μεσαι δε Διος μεν ἀγυαι,
Πασαι δ' ἀνθρωπων ἀγοραι, μεση δε θαλασσα,
Και λιμενες παντη δε Διος κεχρημεθα παντες.

i. e. Let us begin with God, whom we men ought never to pass by without a due commemoration. For all ways are full of God, and all the communities of men, nay the very Sea and its ports: Seeing all of us do every-where partake of the benefit of God's presence.

The next is even Apollo himself in his Oracle, Ap. Pophyr. in Elog. Philos.

Παντα Θεω πληρη, παντη Θεος ἐστιφαωνται
Παντα ζωογονων ὁσσα πνειετε και ἑρπει.

i. e. All things are full of God: For God is every-where present, enlivening all things that breathe and creep.

future rewards and punishments, Rom. ii. 14, 15. So that the Gentiles, as the apostle says, who had not the law, did yet attain by nature to do the things written in the law, their own reason becoming this way a law to them. Whence it came to pass, that their consciences accused or excused them, according as they acted agreeably to these principles, or otherwise, Rom. i. 19, 20, &c. For what may be known of God, was manifest in them, God having shewed it unto them. For the apostle sticks not to say, that they did clearly see the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, by the things which he had made. Whence he shews how unreasonably they did act, when they ran into idolatry and wickedness.

For, surely, a right improvement of the above-mentioned principles, would have led them into a quite contrary practice. And of this we have instances in many of the Heathen Moralists, particularly of the Stoical Sect, who from hence arrived at a very high and elevated pitch of knowledge and practice both; though the latter bare no exact proportion to the former in the best of them. However this is certain, that as the Jews are to be judged according to the Mosaical law, and Christians according to the gospel: So Heathens are only accountable to God for the improvement of their reason, where they had no opportunities to understand the import of revelation, as the apostle assures us, Rom. ii. 12. And, therefore,

3. This makes a third particular, wherein this kingdom of God consisteth, viz. His judging men, and rendering unto them according to their acting, in congruity with, or opposition to this law. For men's reason can-

cannot infer any thing more certain from the natural principles I named before, than that which God propoſed to Cain of old: "If thou doſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted? But if thou doſt evil, ſin lieth at the door," Gen. iv. 7. For if we allow God to be powerful, juſt and merciful, we muſt conclude that he will act agreeably to theſe attributes in his governing and judging men. And therefore the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks excellently, when he ſays, "Power belongeth unto God, and mercy alſo, O Lord; for thou doſt render to every man according to his work," Pſal. lxii. 11, 12.

But, 2dly, God's kingdom is taken in a more peculiar and limited ſenſe, for his kingdom of grace, or ſpecial providence over his church and people. And in this ſenſe, moſt frequently, if not conſtantly, are the phraſes of the Kingdom of God, and Kingdom of Heaven to be underſtood, when they occur to us in the New Teſtament. For by theſe and the like expreſſions, the goſpel-œconomy and erection is to be underſtood. When therefore John the Baptiſt came to uſher in this new diſpenſation, by preparing men for the reception thereof, he ſays, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Mat. iii. 2. And, in like manner, Chriſt himſelf begins his miniſtry with the ſame expreſſion, preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; or the Kingdom of God, as another Evangeliſt calls it, Mat. iv. 17. Mark i. 14, 15. of which he gives this account: "After that John was put in priſon, Jeſus came into Galilee, preaching the goſpel of the kingdom of God, and ſaying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the goſpel," Mat. vi. 33. and xii. 28. And becauſe our Lord Jeſus is the great adminiſtrator of this kingdom, there-

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fore it is called, by a ſpeciality, the kingdom of the Son of God, Col. i. 13. And elſewhere theſe expreſſions are joined, and this kingdom is called the kingdom both of Chriſt and of God, Eph. v. 5. becauſe Chriſt acts in all things relating to this kingdom as the great delegate of his Father; upon which account it is ſaid, that Chriſt is now gone to heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made ſubject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22. For this kingdom of God, which John and Chriſt preached as near at hand, was not fully erected until Chriſt's aſcenſion, nay ſpeaking properly, not until Chriſtianity had triumphed over Judaiſm in the everſion of that conſtitution. For ſo our Lord himſelf doth expreſly determine this matter, when ſpeaking of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and Judea, he attributes this to his acting as king and general of his people againſt his enemies the Jews, though he made uſe of the Pagan Romans to do the execution. So that when he ſays, that then men ſhould ſee the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and glory, Luke xxi. 27: we muſt not imagine that he intended to ſay, that they ſhould ſee him with bodily eyes, but mentally; as beholding Jeruſalem compaſſed about with the Roman armies, and deſtroyed by them, ver. 20. 21. as he had predicted and threatened. From whence it was eaſy to conclude, that it was Chriſt that ſent them on that errand, (as even Titus himſelf owned, if we may believe * an enemy), ſeeing he tells us that theſe were the times of

* I mean by this enemy Philoſtratus, or Apollonius Tyaneus, or Titus Veſpaſian himſelf, or rather all three: for all of them join in owing this truth. The hiſtory I refer to is in Philoſtrat. de vita Apoll. Tyann. Lib. 6. Cap. 14. pag. 305. A. where after he had told us, of Titus his refuſing to be crowned by the Romans and their Allies, for the conqueſt of Jeruſalem; he tells us that Titus himſelf gave this as the reaſon of his refuſing this honour, viz. becauſe he was

of his vengeance, that all things might be fulfilled which are written, ver. 22. Now that this was the firſt conſpicuous triumph of Chriſtianity over its firſt enemies the Jews, is expreſly told us by our Saviour, when he tells his diſciples, that when theſe things ſhould begin to come to paſs, they were to look up and lift up their heads, becauſe their redemption did thus draw nigh, ver. 28. And what he means by redemption here, is plain from what follows. "When therefore (ſays he) ye ſee theſe things come to paſs, know ye that the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand," ver. 31.

And this leads in our minds to underſtand our Lord's meaning in many other places: As particularly in his anſwer to the Phariſees, when they demanded to know, when the kingdom of God ſhould come, Luke. xvii. 20, 21. For, ſays our Lord, the kingdom of God comes not

was not the proper conqueror of Judea, but the ſervant of God, and the miniſter of his juſtice in that execution; to whom, as being angry with the Jews, he had given his aſſiſtance and ſervice. *μη γδαυτος ταυτα ἀργασθαι, θεω δε ὀργιζοντι ἐπιδιδοκεναι τας ἀυτου χειρας.* And then Philoſtratus tells us, how Apollonius wrote to Titus, commending him exceedingly for this anſwer; and how gratefully Titus acknowledges this commendation of Apollonius. So that both Titus in giving this reaſon, Apollonius in approving it, and Philoſtratus in relating it, do concur in one teſtimony for the verity of what Chriſt propheſies concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and conſequently give their ſuffrage to Chriſt and Chriſtianity, beyond their own intention. For how romantic ſoever this hiſtory of Philoſtratus be, yet we have no reaſon to doubt of the truth of this; both becauſe it agrees ſo well with our Lord's propheſy, and with the account Joſephus gives of Titus his care to preſerve the temple, and of his offers of ſecurity to the infatuated Jews. See Joſeph. de Bello Jud Lib. 7. Cap. 10. &c. Now how remarkable is it, that there ſhould be any thing found, as a confirmation of Chriſtianity, in the life of ſuch a man, who (if there ever were ſuch a perſon as Philoſtratus makes this Apollonius to be) ſeems to have been raiſed up on purpoſe by the devil, to take off from the glory of our bleſſed Saviour, by aſſiſting him to ape him, as far as he could? At leaſt he has been made uſe of ſince, both by Hierocles of old and Mr Blount and others of late, to detract from Chriſtianity, and to ſerve the cauſe of Deiſm, as they call it.

not μετα παρατηρησεως, with outward ſhew, pomp or pageantry (as emperors and kings do, when they come with great ſtate and glory, attended by their ſervants and guards, and received with acclamations and all expreſſions of joy by their ſubjects). Neither ſhall they ſee this kingdom by ſuch viſible marks, as to be able to ſay, Lo here it is, or lo there ye ſee it. For behold, the kingdom of God is among you already, and yet ye perceive it not. But that the more full erection of this was to be after Chriſt's ſufferings, he himſelf aſſures us, in what follows. "As the lightning ſhineth from one part under heaven to the other; ſo ſhall the Son of Man be in his day. But firſt muſt he ſuffer many things, and be rejected of this generation," &c. ver. 24, 25.

Now this goſpel-kingdom takes in three things chiefly, viz. the grand charter or law thereof, its ſubjects, and effects: and all theſe go under the name of the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God. 1. The goſpel itſelf, or the New-Teſtament revelation of things is called by this name; as it contains the offer of ſalvation, requires faith and repentance as the terms of obtaining it, encourageth us to do ſo by many and gracious promiſes of bleſſings purchaſed and to be enjoyed, and directs us how to live by many excellent precepts enjoined us, and rules ſet before us. This goſpel-revelation, I ſay, is called the kingdom of God, as being the grand charter and law of it, and conſequently the great inſtrument by which our Lord and ſovereign rules and governs us Chriſtians. In this ſenſe certainly we muſt underſtand our Saviour, when he threatens the Jews, that becauſe of their infidelity and wickedneſs, the kingdom of God ſhould be taken from them, and given to others that ſhould receive it more readily, and improve

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it better, Matth. xxi. 43. By which we are given to underſtand that the Jewiſh theocraty ſhould come to an end, becauſe of their rejecting Chriſt; and that this ſhould not, properly ſpeaking, be deſtroyed, but removed from them to the Gentiles; where it ſhould be erected under a new name, and in another and more ſpiritual manner be exerted and put forth. Thus the great charter of Chriſt's kingdom comes to be called by the name thereof: and we ſee this accompliſhed, now that the goſpel which was firſt offered to the Jews is come unto us. But elſewhere the goſpel goes under the proper name and deſignation of the law of Chriſt, Gal. vi. 2. as in other places it is called the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, and the law of faith, and the royal law, Rom. viii. 2. James ii. 8. 2. By the kingdom of God in the New Teſtament, we are ſometimes to underſtand the ſubjects of it, both real and nominal. For the viſible church, or the external conſtitution thereof in the world, comprehends both theſe, and is made up of them. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is compared to a net caſt into the ſea, which gathered of every kind, Matth. xiii. 47, 48. Though at laſt there is a vaſt difference made between true and counterfeit ſubjects, as appears by the ſequel of the ſame parable. And to the ſame purpoſe are the other parables in the ſame chapter calculated, viz. that of the ſower, and that of the ſeed and tares. 3. The goſpel-œconomy is called the kingdom of God, not only in relation to its revelation, and ſubjects, but with reference alſo to its happy effects in the world, eſpecially to thoſe that do truly ſubject themſelves to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore we are told, that the kingdom of God ſtandeth not in meat or drink, or any external thing properly, but in righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, Rom. xiv. 17.

Therefore the heavenly angels ſung this ſong of joy, at the nativity of Chriſt, with relation to his kingdom, that he was to bring glory to God in the higheſt, peace on earth, and good will towards men, Luke ii. 13, 14.

Now from the conſideration of theſe three things, it is eaſy to obſerve; That the government of God over the church mediately, and of Chriſt immediately, is juſtly called the kingdom of God; ſeeing it is according to this divine charter and law, over ſuch ſubjects, and in order to reach thoſe happy effects. Whence we ſee how God doth dwell in his church, and among his people, now ſince the erection of Chriſtianity.

But becauſe true Chriſtians are only the ſubjects of Chriſt, with whom he dwells, in a moſt peculiar and ſpecial ſenſe: therefore it is fit we conſider this more directly and diſtinctly. I did indeed take ſome notice of this in the introductory conſiderations: where I curſorily made mention of our Saviour's promiſe to good men, that his Father and he would come and make their abode with them, John xiv. 21, 23. whence he is ſaid to ſtand at the door of our hearts, knocking there, in order to be admitted, Rev. iii. 20. and upon which account, when he is admitted, he is ſaid to dwell in the hearts of true Chriſtians, Eph. iii. 17. But I am now to conſider more particularly, wherein this conſiſts. Now there are three things wherein God and Chriſt's dwelling in the hearts of true Chriſtians doth ſtand, and which his kingdom in the ſouls of his ſaints, and over their perſons, doth denote and import: 1. His taking poſſeſſion of their ſouls by the enlightening and ſanctifying influences and operations of his Holy Spirit, Col. i. 13. delivering them thus from the power of darkneſs,

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and tranſlating them into the kingdom of his dear Son; whence they become the true ſubjects of this glorious King of ſaints. Thus they that were ſometimes darkneſs, are made light in the Lord, in order to walk as children of the light; the fruit of the ſpirit being in all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs, and truth, Eph. v. 8, 9. And from hence, 2. They are directed and aſſiſted to walk as children of the light, perfecting holineſs in the fear of the Lord, exerciſing themſelves always to have a conſcience void of offence, both toward God, and toward men, Acts xxiv. 16. So that their outward walk, as well as their inward frame, is conformed to the law and inſtitution of Jeſus Chriſt; ſhining thus as lights in the dark world, in order to the conviction of the ſame, and for the honour of their great maſter and holy profeſſion. Now ſuch perſons are, 3. Privileged further by the divine protection againſt all enemies, viſible and inviſible. Therefore as every proud imagination, and high thought or paſſion in them, is brought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt; 2 Cor. x. 5. and as they are ſtrengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs, Col. i. 11. So at laſt all their enemies ſhall be deſtroyed from before them, and they ſhall be glorified as overcomers, with power over the nations of their adverſaries, Rev. ii. 26. being honoured with being ſet down at Chriſt's throne, even as he overcame and is ſet down with his Father on his throne, Rev. iii. 21.

From all this which I have ſaid, I ſuppoſe we cannot but ſee how God doth dwell among men now upon the earth, by the erection of Chriſtianity therein. "He hath anointed his Chriſt upon his holy hill of Sion, and given him dominion over the nations, to rule in the

midſt of his enemies." And our bleſſed Lord has taken to him his great power, and has reigned: and the crown ſhall ever flouriſh upon his head, in ſpite of all that hell and a wicked world can do. So that, though he may be provoked by particular nations to remove his dwelling from among them, and take their candleſtick, away, as was the caſe of the Jews: Yet he aſſured us, that he will never totally defert the earth, but continue a church in it as long as men continue upon it; and that he will be with his ſervants to the end of time: So that the ſhout of a king ſhall ever be heard among them. And there are therefore three properties peculiar to this kingdom, which deſerve our conſideration.

The firſt is, That it is a ſpiritual kingdom, not modelled and conſtituted as earthly monarchies are. This our Lord tells us of, in that noble teſtimony he gave to the truth before Pontius Pilate, "That his kingdom was not of this world," John xviii. 36, 37. But, ſecondly, though it be a ſpiritual kingdom, yet it is a powerful and ſtrong one, above all that are in the world, able to break to pieces all that oppoſe it and ſtand in its way. Thus it is repreſented to us by Daniel, under the emblem of a ſtone, cut out of the mountains without hands; which yet increaſed to ſuch a prodigious bigneſs and ſtrength, as to fill the whole world, and break all the monarchies of it to pieces, Dan. i. 31. And to the ſame purpoſe our bleſſed Saviour compares it to a muſtard-ſeed growing up into a tree; and to a little bit of leaven that leavened inſenſibly, yet ſtrongly, three meaſures of meal, Mat. xiii. 32, 33. The third property of this kingdom is, That it is everlaſting, and not of a temporary and ſhort duration as earthly kingdoms are. For the kingdom of Chriſt is ſaid to be an eter-

eternal one, which ſhall never paſs away nor be deſtroyed; and that therefore the ſaints under him ſhall take and poſſeſs this kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever, Dan. vii. 14. 18. For, though as to the preſent œconomy of things in the world, Chriſt's kingdom muſt end, when he delivers up an account of it to the Father at the laſt day, 1 Cor. xv. 24. 28. Yet as to the eſſentials of it, it is certain he muſt reign for ever; and that of his kingdom there ſhall be no end, Luke i. 33.

And now I have finiſhed what I had to ſay unto the firſt inquiry, How and in what way we are to conceive of God's dwelling on the earth, both in a more general ſenſe with reſpect to mankind, and in a more ſpecial one with relation to the church, particularly real and true Chriſtians. By all which, as I have ſufficiently proved the truth of the thing, ſo I hope I have guarded againſt all mean notions of it on the one ſide, and wild fancies on the other. So that having given the true ſcriptural account of it, I preſume to ſay, that it is eaſy, after this, to form a ſatisfactory and intelligible idea of it in our minds. And therefore it is time now to proceed to the next head; which will no leſs require ſome cloſe application of thought.

Let us therefore now, ſecondly, conſider the wonderfulneſs of God's dwelling with men upon earth. For ſeeing dwelling ſuppoſeth agreement and converſe, there is juſt reaſon that all men, as well as Solomon, ſhould admire how the great God can come down ſo low as this earth, not only to govern it, but to inhabit there (as it were), and to dwell with men upon it, as a king with his ſubjects, or a father with his children.

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And therefore I muſt now conſider what is the ſubſtratum or foundation of this converſe between theſe parties, or what it is in them that lays a foundation for ſuch a coaleſcing and agreement, conſidering the infiniteneſs of the one, and the limitedneſs of the other. But while I propoſe this, and ſeem to ſtart a difficulty againſt it, I find that this very thing that ſeems to make againſt this converſe, doth indeed make for it, and is the very foundation of it. For the infinitude and plenitude of God renders him equally capable to converſe with men, as to make or govern them: that I ſay not alſo, that his government of men, which is moral and in the way of reaſon, is inconceivable without ſomething of this. I confeſs the limitedneſs of man ſeems exceedingly to militate againſt this notion. For we will be apt to cry out, But how is it poſſible that ſuch finite and limited beings ſhould conceive of God, or be capable of converſe with him? But, beſides that man is not ſo confined in his thoughts, but that he can apprehend ſomething of the divine excellencies, nor in his will and affections, but that he can aſpire after immortal bliſs, and purſue it according to the beſt of his underſtanding: I ſay, beſides all this on man's part, if we conſider God rightly, we ſhall find a ſolution of this doubt, ſeeing the infiniteneſs of God is certainly ſufficient to ſupply all our defects, as we are creatures, and ſo finite beings. For ſurely it is as eaſy to conceive of God's converſing with men, as it is of his creating all things of old, and governing them ſince. So that, if we conſider man in relation to his bare natural capacity, as he is the workmanſhip of God, abſtracting from the conſideration of his adventitious defects, as he is now in a lapſed ſtate; we are neceſſarily led to believe the verity of God's converſe with him. And

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therefore, though it was the effect of God's mere good-will, that he made our firſt parents reaſonable creatures; yet after he made them ſuch, it was not poſſible that he ſhould wholly exclude them from his converſe whilſt they continued obedient: For if God ſhould have done ſo, it muſt have been either from a defect of power or goodneſs. To ſuppoſe either of which is equally abſurd as blaſphemous: for an impotent or wicked God is as great a contradiction to reaſon, as horrid and deviliſh in the expreſſion of it. Therefore ſuppoſing the plenitude of power and goodneſs of God, that the idea of him does neceſſarily involve, we muſt immediately conclude, That as God is able to condeſcend ſo far as to have communion with us, and allow and capacitate us for converſing with him; ſo he is no leſs actually communicative of himſelf to thoſe that love and ſerve him, ſeeing his tender mercies are over all his works.

But if his reaſonable creatures, who becauſe they are ſuch, muſt alſo be allowed to be free agents, do proceed ſo far, as to caſt off his fear, and abandon his ſervice, refuſing to love or obey him any more; then I readily confeſs, a foundation is laid this way, for God's refuſing to converſe any more with them: For in this caſe the ſupreme Majeſty may juſtly be expected ſo far to abandon ſuch wretches, as either to annihilate them, or continue them eternally ſhut out from his preſence, and under the ſevereſt torments that he can inflict, or they endure, without being extirpated. As therefore it was diſobedience in our firſt parents; that broke off all that fellowſhip that was between God and them before; ſo it is the ſame cauſe produceth the ſame effect ſtill among men. From all which it is eaſy to ſee, that God's converſe with an innocent reaſonable

ſonable creature, and his abandoning of a rebellious and treacherous one, are equally deducible as natural and neceſſary effects from the above-named cauſes.

That therefore God ſhould converſe with innocent and holy creatures, and dwell among them, when he has made them ſuch as the angels in heaven are now, and as Adam once was, is no matter of admiration at all, as is vulgarly and too often aſſerted. So far am I from this opinion, if I may call it one, that I ſhould admire indeed, if God ſhould abandon thoſe that never were guilty of diſobedience to him. Which yet I do not ſay, as if the worth and merit of an innocent creature were the proper foundation of this: For it is the nature of God himſelf, to whom it is as eſſential to be good as great, that I do found this entirely upon: For I muſt declare that I firmly believe, that the diſcrimination between that which we call moral good and evil, ariſeth from the nature of God, antecedently to the conſideration of his will: For I am no more certain that God is, than I am of this, that he muſt will, as well as act, according to his nature and eſſential perfections.

But this I confeſs (as I hinted before) is matter of the higheſt wonder and admiration to me, that God ſhould make ſuch creatures as angels and men are. For though he muſt love them, being made and continuing innocent; yet ſeeing he ſtood in need of no adventitious or external ſervice or praiſe, being infinitely happy in himſelf; it was merely from his free-will, in a way of condeſcenſion, that he was pleaſed to give origin to any ſuch. But this I muſt add here, by way of caution, that though God muſt love and communicate himſelf to holy and ſinleſs creatures; yet he is not tied

tied to do ſo, as to equal degrees. If all be happy, they have ſurely enough; and God may act in other reſpects, as he ſhall ſee beſt. It is indeed a matter too high for us to enquire into at this diſtance, whether in the various degrees of the glory of the angels above, God has not, in the different formation of them, laid any foundation for his communicating himſelf to ſome more than others. And therefore I chuſe to ſpeak in the general, as I ſaid but juſt now; that ſeeing God will deſert none of them, and conſequently makes them all equally happy in the eſſentials of bliſs and glory, we have reaſon to leave him to act in additional circumſtances, as his wiſdom ſees fitteſt to be done. I know indeed that ſome, whom I cannot but look upon as both learned and good men, do hold the contrary opinion; that God may deſert an innocent and ſinleſs creature; and may therefore quarrel with me for holding the negative. But that there may be no logomachy between us, about the word deſertion here; I do declare, that I do underſtand by it, not every thing that may come under that name, but ſuch a deſertion as denotes an utter withdrawing of ſtrength, and with-holding of aſſiſtance from the creature, ſo as to render him altogether incapable any longer to reſiſt temptation, and thereby neceſſitates his ſinning. Which whoſoever holds, and can free God from being the real cauſe and author of ſinning, will do more than I am capable of conceiving. Though, at the ſame time, I ſhall be very far from charging any perſon with this conſequent, as his opinion. For I have long ago learned to impute nothing to any man as his ſentiment, but what he owns as ſuch in expreſs words: ſeeing what I may think is a neceſſary inference from a thing, may not be ſuch to him. But to return; I do confeſs

it was not poſſible for God (ſpeaking in a moral ſenſe) to make a reaſonable creature otherwiſe than in a mutable ſtate, ſo as he might ſin if he pleaſed, becauſe otherwiſe he had neither been a free agent, nor in a ſtate of trial. But this is ſo far from patronizing the former opinion, that it quite deſtroys it. For if God neceſſitated the fall of angels and the firſt parents of mankind, then were they, in that caſe, neceſſary and not free agents. And if ſo, I muſt ſay a bold word, that they were not, nor indeed could be (as ſo circumſtanced) capable of diſobedience, no more than the wind and lightning are in the miſchiefs they do. Nor will the metaphyſical notion of the eſſence of the will's ſtanding in a ſpontaniety, and not in an indifference, ward off the force of this, though it were never ſo true: ſeeing that which neceſſitates the will to act ſo, muſt be the cauſe of the action, and of the ſoul's acting thus ſpontaneouſly likewiſe.

But we muſt leave the conſideration of man as innocent, and conſider him as ſinful, in order to ſee the wonderfulneſs of this truth, that God condeſcendeth to dwell with men upon the earth. This no doubt Solomon had in his thoughts in this ſhort and abrupt expreſſion. For it is hardly poſſible that any perſon can conſider this truth, of God's dwelling with men on the earth, but he muſt reflect more or leſs explicitly on the qualifications, if I may ſo call them, of the different parties that are ſuppoſed to dwell together. And therefore as the thoughts of God's greatneſs and our meanneſs are equally natural on this occaſion: So likewiſe is the conſideration of God's purity and our vileneſs, of his kindneſs and our treachery and diſobedience.

Now

Now ſeeing it is inconceivable, that two enemies can chuſe to dwell, live, walk and converſe together as friends, unleſs they be agreed and made ſuch, Amos iii. 3.: Hence we muſt neceſſarily conclude, that God's dwelling among men upon the earth, doth ſuppoſe that he and they are reconciled and made friends again: Nay it will follow further from hence, that according to the degree of reconciliation that is between them, the degree alſo of their converſe and communion muſt be. Therefore as reconciliation in the general is ſuppoſed in all the communication there is between God and lapſed creatures: So an outward and federal reconciliation lays the foundation of external communion with God; which was the caſe of the Jewiſh nation of old, and of Chriſtian communities now: And an inward and ſpiritual reconciliation lays the foundation alſo of an internal and divine converſe with him. So that we muſt now enquire, whence it comes to paſs, that God doth ſo far condeſcend to men, as to be willing to dwell with them upon the earth.

And here reaſon would intirely fail us, if revelation did not help us out. For that God is merciful, could never anſwer the difficulty, or aſſure us that he muſt thus be gracious to us: ſeeing we muſt conſider him alſo as juſt and faithful to his word. And who could ever adjuſt the meaſures God muſt keep in his actings, ſo as juſtice and mercy ſhould equally compoſe his providence in relation to lapſed men? So that unleſs the ſacred Scriptures did clear up this matter, we ſhould ever have remained pendulous between hope and fear, uncertain how our Maker would diſpoſe of us; either in acting according to his mercy, becauſe we were his creatures, or according to what we had de-

ſerved, as being rebellious ſubjects. Nay, without this light we might be led even into deſpair, by conſidering God as the ſupreme Rector of the world, and our offence therefore not as a mere debt, but a crime even of the higheſt nature, as being the worſt ſort of treaſon. So that we might have juſt reaſon to apprehend that God was ſo obliged to puniſh us, that it was not poſſible for him to diſpenſe with his own law, as being to our apprehenſion, not the law of his free-will properly, but the law of his own nature.

How endleſsly then might we run out into ſuch ſpeculations, upon this great and myſterious head, if the holy oracles of God did not clear up the matter to us, when they repreſent God as obliged to puniſh us, unleſs ſatisfaction be given to his juſtice for the violation of his law; whilſt at the ſame time they diſcover Chriſt offering himſelf as a propitiatory ſacrifice for ſinners, in order thus to endure what ſhould be eſteemed and accepted as equivalent to our ſuffering for ever? This and God's accepting of it ſolves all our difficulties, and diſpels all our fears: eſpecially when we ſee this actually accompliſhed in the incarnation, ſufferings and reſurrection of our Lord. And without this it had not been poſſible for God ever to have dwelt with men upon earth, who are at beſt but ſinful duſt and aſhes, as the ſcripture phraſe is.

This therefore being ſuppoſed, may it not be probable, that Solomon doth ſpeak here, obliquely at leaſt, with ſome reference to Chriſt's incarnation? Should we confine the inſpired writings, as we do human ones, there were no room left, I confeſs, for any conjecture of this kind. But this were as unreaſonable, as it would be

be to confine the underſtanding of God to the ſame limited way of thinking by ſucceſſive ideas, by which the human intellect is bounded. And therefore the Hebrew doctors of old, as we ſee in the practice of Chriſt and his apoſtles afterwards, did interpret ſcriptures after another manner than has been done ſince. Of this, innumerable examples might be given; but one or two may ſuffice at this time. He that reads the words of David; "Out of the mouth of babes and ſucklings haſt thou ordained ſtrength, becauſe of thine enemies, that thou mighteſt ſtill the enemy and the avenger," Pſal. viii. 2. I ſay, he that reads theſe words, might, I ſuppoſe, be apt to think that David did only inſinuate here, that it was no unuſual method with God to defeat mighty deſigns by very ſmall inſtruments; and that he tacitly has relation in particular to God's defeating Goliah, and by conſequence the whole army of the Philiſtines by his hands, when he was, as it were, a poor child not known or regarded before. But our Lord applies this paſſage quite another way, when he interprets it as a prophecy of the acclamations and Hoſannas with which the common people accompanied him into Jeruſalem, Matth. xxi. 16. And again, in the ſame pſalm David tells us, That when he conſidered the heavens, and the glorious luminaries thereof, he could not but wonder that God made ſuch account of ſo poor a creature as man; Pſal. viii. 5, 6. adding, That he had dignified him, by making him a little lower than the angels, and by putting all other creatures here below under his feet. The firſt or literal ſenſe of which, I ſuppoſe, is too clear to need any proof. And yet without any regard to this, the apoſtle applies it altogether to Chriſt, and that by way of interpretation, and not of a bare accommodation; as I believe any perſon will think that reads his words: 1 Cor.

xv. 25, 27. "Chriſt muſt reign (ſays he) till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.—For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he ſaith, all things are put under him, it is manifeſt that he is excepted who put all things under him." And elſewhere the apoſtle applies this paſſage the ſame way, when he ſays, Eph. i. 20, 21. "That God hath raiſed Chriſt far above all principalities and powers, both in this world and that to come; having put all things under his feet," &c. But the apoſtle comments upon this paſſage yet more fully, when he ſays; Heb. ii. 5, 6. "God hath not put the world to come, of which we ſpeak, under the dominion of angels. But one in a certain place teſtified, ſaying, What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of Man that thou viſiteſt him? Thou madeſt him a little lower than the angels,—thou haſt put all things under his feet.—But now we ſee not yet all things put under him. But we ſee Jeſus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the ſuffering of death, crowned with honour and glory," &c. Nay, which is yet as wonderful, ſeveral expreſſions of the nineteenth Pſalm, which every one would think do plainly relate to the works of nature (by which men may ſee and apprehend the being and power of God), are interpreted of the apoſtles and their preaching in the world; when he ſays, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I ſay, Have they not heard? Yes verily, for their ſound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world," Rom. x. 17, 18. And therefore many Chriſtian expoſitors, after Juſtin Martyr, underſtand Chriſt to be meant by the ſun that is ſaid there to go out of his chambers as a bridegroom (Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 295. B.). Nay ſeveral Jewiſh Rabbies have interpreted the ſame expreſſion

preſſion as prophetical of their Meſſiah. And therefore I think we have reaſon not to deſpiſe this interpretation, eſpecially when we may juſtly ſuppoſe that Malachi alludes to that expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt, when he ſpeaks of Chriſt under the title of Sun of Righteouſneſs, chap. iv. 2.

Now if man's dominion over the creature, and the works of creation, be interpreted as typical of Chriſt, have we not at leaſt equal reaſon to ſuppoſe that God's dwelling in the material temple of old, was typical alſo of Chriſt's taking upon him our nature, and of his dwelling thus bodily among us? And ſurely he that reads the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, where the temple, the mercy-ſeat and ark, and, in a word, all that liturgy, and even œconomy, are interpreted as typical of Chriſt: I ſay, he that reads and conſiders this, will not think it ſtrange that we interpret this place with a reference to Chriſt's incarnation. But beſides all this, I would have it conſidered, that our bleſſed Lord himſelf doth plainly ſuppoſe this, when he calls his body by the deſignation of a temple; ſaying, "Deſtroy this temple, and in three days I will raiſe it up again," John ii. 19. Now, that our Saviour ſpeaketh this, in relation to the temple's being a type of his body, or human nature, is not only plain from the words themſelves, but alſo from the occaſion of his ſpeaking them, the place where, and the perſons to whom he ſpoke them: For theſe words were uttered by him, immediately after his driving the buyers and ſellers out of the temple, to the Jews that were witneſſes of that action, when he was yet in it, or in the court before it. In relation to all theſe circumſtances, he ſees fit to let them know that the Sheckina that dwelt in their temple, had now taken up its perpetual reſi-

reſidence in him; and that therefore though they ſhould kill him, he would raiſe up the temple of his body in three days afterwards. And therefore the apoſtle John ſpeaks in this dialect, John iv. 19. when he ſays, that the Logos (or the antient Memra and Sheckina that dwelt in the temple) was made fleſh (i. e. aſſumed a human body and nature), and therein dwelt among men, who beheld his glory (viz. reſident in that body as in a temple), as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. So that the human nature of Chriſt is that now to Chriſtians, which the temple was of old to the Jews. For as that was the only place of God's public and ſpecial reſidence, towards which the Iſraelites were to pray; in which all ſacrifices were to be offered up, where God was conſulted, and where God gave forth his edicts, and where he returned anſwers to men, and in a word manifeſted both his preſence and will: So when the fulneſs of time came, when the antitype of this holy place appeared in the world, the temple was deſerted by this glorious inhabitant, who left it, to animate and dwell in a body: "For it pleaſed God that in him all fulneſs ſhould dwell, even all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily," Col. i. 19. and ii. 9.

So that we have no temporal Jeruſalem, temple or ark more. For heaven is the firſt of theſe, and Chriſt the latter to us. The temple of God is now opened in heaven, in which is ſeen the ark of his teſtament, Rev. xi. 19. And we are not now under the New Teſtament, called to journey up to or pray towards any earthly city or temple. "But we are come to the heavenly Zion, and celeſtial Jeruſalem, to join in with the innumerable armies of angels, in worſhipping God the judge

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of all; and all this through Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, whose blood speaks good things unto us," Heb. xii. 22. &c. For there our blessed Saviour remains as our priest, making continual intercession for us, Heb. vi. 20. and ix. 24. where he offers up in that golden censer, the prayers of all saints; which being perfumed with the incense of his own merits, go up as a sweet odour before God, Rev. viii. 3. By all which it appears that Christ is the only medium through which God comes down in mercies and blessings to us, and through which we ascend in petitions and prayers to him. In which sense he is the only centre of the converse and communication there is between God and men. And therefore he is our only temple under the gospel. So that they that would prove their cathedral worship from the temple, seem to forget both what the Jewish dispensation was, and the Christian is. For the temple was the only earthly cathedral ever God authorised. And those who have attempted to rebuild this under a new name, and have aped that antient but now vacated worship, as the Papists have done for many ages past, had need to consider how disagreeable this is to the design of Christ's coming into the world, and the nature of the gospel, and what mischief such impositions have done to Christianity.

But to return: why may we not suppose, after what I have said, that Solomon had some eye to Christ's incarnation, in the words of our text? For if Abraham saw Christ's day long before, John viii. 56. and if Jacob, Moses and others before saw this also by faith, and died in the expectation of the coming of the Messias, Heb. xi. 13. 39, 40. why should we think that this was hid from Solomon, especially upon such a solemn occasion,

that had ſuch a typical relation to Chriſt's coming in the fleſh, as we have ſeen? But if this ſhould not be allowed me, yet ſurely none can juſtly deny but that the Spirit of God did ſo influence Solomon in this his inſpired prayer, as to make theſe words drop from him as relative to Chriſt, whether he actually thought of him or not at this time. For let us but abſtract from the apoſtle's character and authority, and there will appear much more ground for my explaining theſe words in reference to Chriſt than there can be ſuppoſed to be for interpreting the above-cited paſſages of the Pſalms after this manner. For as it is ſure, God had never dwelt among men, but upon the account of Chriſt's aſſuming our nature: ſo we know, and might make it apparent to all (were this a place for it), that the Old Teſtament ſaints did all expect the viſible appearance of the Meſſiah. For is it not upon this account that Chriſt tells his apoſtles, that many kings and prophets had deſired to ſee and hear the things they did, (Luke x. 24.) who were debarred from obtaining that privilege?

But ſuppoſing there were indeed nothing that could be ſo much as a probable ground for our explaining this phraſe, of God's dwelling with men on the earth, in a relation to Chriſt's aſſuming our nature, and appearing in the world, that he might dwell with men, as one of themſelves, in order to be the better capacitated to govern us: I ſay, ſuppoſing there were indeed no foundation for my explaining my text this way; yet, conſidering that this is the foundation of God's dwelling with men, and of all the communications and converſe between him and them, as being the only way to the Father, and he that hath revealed him to us, and in whoſe name we can only be ſaved: I ſay, conſidering

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all theſe things, I had good reaſon to take notice of this, in diſcourſing of this ſubject.

And now having ſeen how juſtly we may admire, that God ſhould dwell with ſinful men on the earth, and lay ſuch an aſtoniſhing foundation for his doing ſo, I might expatiate here upon the wonderfulneſs of the divine love, and the various inſtances of it. How aſtoniſhing is it to think that the ſupreme wiſdom or Logos of God, who was from eternity the Father's delight, Prov. viii. 30, 31. and his Father likewiſe his, ſhould take pleaſure in the habitable places of this earth, and have his delights alſo with the lapſed ſons of Adam? That he ſhould paſs by the fallen angels, and take upon him the nature of man, Heb. ii. 16. exalting it thus relatively above the angelical, by an union with himſelf, in order thus to render us capable of converſe with God, and to be himſelf a medium through which God might converſe with us: how wonderful a thing is it? ſeeing beſides the performance itſelf, no leſs than a ſpiritual marriage-relation between God and us doth reſult, when we found upon this foundation and approach to God this way. So that the Scripture gives us ground to call this dwelling of God, by the name of cohabitation, in a divine ſenſe, in as far as God tells his people that he is married unto them, Jer. iii. 14. and that their Maker, this way, is become their huſband, Iſa. liv. 5. and they betrothed unto God as his wife, in righteouſneſs, judgment, loving-kindneſs, tender mercies, and faithfulneſs, Hoſ. ii. 19, 20. In which reſpects the apoſtle tells Chriſtians, that they were to look upon themſelves as married to Chriſt, Rom. vii. 4. and eſpouſed to him for that end, as a chaſte virgin, in order to dwell and cohabit with him, in holineſs and purity here, and in glory and bliſs hereafter.

2 Cor. xi. 2. And beſides all theſe things, I might ſhew the wonderfulneſs of God's love, not only in giving us Chriſt, but with him all other things. That he hath made ſuch great and precious promiſes to us, that we might come to partake of a * divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. and that he hath ſent the Spirit to guide us in this world, and to aſſiſt us in our addreſſes to heaven, that we may be ſucceſsful in them: theſe, I ſay, afford new and conſtant matter of wondering, how God ſhould condeſcend to be at all this pains, in order to render us fit for communion with himſelf both now and for ever.

But theſe things being ſo frequently mentioned in popular and ordinary ſermons, and ſo largely and pathetically handled in a great many practical diſcourſes, I am not willing to ſpend any more time this way here. And therefore, leaving theſe hints to be further ſtretched out by your own meditations, I ſhall ſay no more now of this ſubject, but paſs on to the next propoſition. Only I cannot forbear here to cry out with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxliv. 3. "Lord! what is man, that thou takeſt knowledge of him; or the Son of man, that thou makeſt ſuch account of him? Pſal. xxxi. 9. O how great is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee, which thou haſt wrought for them that truſt in thee, before the ſons of men!"

* So we ought to read the words, rather than, as our tranſlation hath it, *the divine nature*; which lays the foundation of a very groſs notion, as if good men did really partake of the incommunicable nature or eſſence of God: which ſome wild enthuſiaſts of old made ſuch uſe of, as to imagine (as they nonſenſically and blaſphemouſly expreſt themſelves) that they were Godded and Chriſted, by their believing the promiſes.

II. PROPOSITION.

The Conſideration of the immenſity of God, as it is moſt wonderful in itſelf; ſo it ſerves not only to raiſe our thoughts to admire that God ſhould ever condeſcend to dwell with men on earth; but alſo to rectify our apprehenſion how and in what manner God can be ſaid to dwell with them, particularly in houſes made with hands.

Beſides all I have already ſaid, as to the wonderfulneſs of God's dwelling with ſinful men on earth, the conſideration of the divine Immenſity lays a new foundation of admiration this way. Not that it is any wonder that an infinite God ſhould communicate himſelf to finite creatures, when they are either innocent or reconciled: but that he ſhould do it in ſuch a way as to aſſume the character of the King of a little tribe of men, and act among them as ſuch, which was the caſe of the Jews; when he was Lord of the univerſe, nay immenſe as well as every-where preſent: for the firſt of theſe denotes more than the latter, as we ſhall preſently ſee.

Now, as it is plain that Solomon had his eyes fixed upon the divine Immenſity, when he cries out, "Behold heaven, yea the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," O our God and King: So it is no leſs perſpicuous, that this part of his exclamation is added as the reaſon of his precedent aſtoniſhment, at the thoughts of God's dwelling with men on the earth. And if we do alſo conſider the ſame words with relation to the laſt clauſe of our text, which is by way of inference from both

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the former parts, and where he ſays, "How then can God dwell in this houſe which I have built?" it will be no leſs plain to us than either of the former, that he does not only ſpeak theſe laſt words by way of admiration, but doth alſo ſuggeſt to our thoughts, How we are to judge of God's dwelling in the temple, and conſequently in any place where his ordinances are purely diſpenſed; ſeeing the conſideration of God's immenſity is ſufficient to baniſh all carnal and groſs ideas of this truth from our minds.

And therefore we are led in here to think of God's immenſity in itſelf, and then to conſider it in relation both to the precedent and ſubſequent truth. And accordingly we have now a threefold inquiry before us.

1. How we are to conceive of God's immenſity.

2. What reaſon this doth afford us for admiring the condeſcenſion of God, in dwelling with men on the earth.

3. How we ought to improve this, in regulating our conceptions as to the manner of God's dwelling with men here below, particularly in houſes made with hands.

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1. Therefore we are led to conſider the divine Immenſity, as to the conception we ought to have of this attribute.

But though this naturally falls in my way here to be conſidered, I muſt confeſs I am exceedingly at a loſs what to ſay on ſo dark a ſubject. For what can a finite mind

mind apprehend of infinity? Even Solomon's capacious ſoul was far too narrow to graſp the full notion of it, and therefore he choſe here rather to believe and admire it, than attempt to define or explain it. And, ſurely, then I might juſtly be excuſed, if I ſhould copy after ſo great an example: For though many have written on this ſubject, yet I muſt confeſs I never yet received any full ſatisfaction this way from any. And neither am I ſo vain as to think I am capable to add any thing conſiderable to the labours of learned men this way. Yet ſeeing God allows us to think, as we can, of his glorious attributes, and bears with our imperfect notions of them, when we are honeſt, ſincere and humble in our thoughts and expreſſions: I hope if I venture to ſay ſomething on this head, which may perhaps be ſatisfactory to ordinary capacities, I ſhall not incur any ſevere cenſure from the more learned and judicious, eſpecially ſeeing I am obliged to be very ſhort and ſuccinct in what I have to offer at this time.

We cannot conceive, my friends, of any real being, but we muſt ſuppoſe it exiſts at ſome time, and in ſome place. For to ſay a thing doth really and actually exiſt, and yet that it doth not exiſt now, or that it exiſts no-where, is as plain a contradiction as I think any man can be guilty of. Let therefore ſome philoſophers diſpute about the nature of ſpirit and body, as long as they pleaſe, and let them deny that ſpirits occupy any place, or that they are any-where, becauſe not extended as bodies are: Yet ſtill it is plain, that if a being exiſt no-where, it exiſts not at all: For I defy any man to form an idea of any ſubſtance, of whatever kind, without a relation to place, as well as duration. And therefore to deny that ſpiritual ſubſtances are any-

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where, becauſe they do not occupy place in the ſame way that bodies do, is an odd way of reaſoning: For our reaſon will force us to believe that a ſpirit, though it do not fill a place as a body does, yet ſtill is in a place, though in a way peculiar to itſelf. For if it were not in a place, it could not act in one; for can that thing act any-where which itſelf is no-where? Seeing, in this caſe, if my ſoul be a ſpirit, and yet not in my body no more than in the body of a tree, it is no more poſſible to conceive that it ſhould inliven and actuate my body, than a tree or any other thing. We muſt not therefore deny a thing, becauſe we are not able to form an idea of the modus of it, or how it is. For at this rate we muſt deny the very being of a ſpirit, ſeeing we have no other idea of it but a negative one, which is indeed, in plain Engliſh, no idea at all; notwithſtanding the bold pretences of ſome men to as clear a perception of it as of Matter. We do indeed know a ſpirit, as well as we do a body, as to its acts and operations (as we know the effects of the air, as well as of the fire and water, which yet we ſee not as we do theſe); but what the ſubſtratum of theſe operations is, which we call the eſſence of it, we have no notion of. And therefore there can be nothing more ſilly, than to tell us that cogitation or volition is the very eſſence of the ſoul: For at the ſame rate any man may aſſert that the eſſence of the water is fluidneſs, and that of the earth fixedneſs.

But to leave ſchool-quibbles, we muſt remember, that as we can only conceive of ſpirit, in contradiſtinction to body; ſo we can only conceive of God's infinity and immenſity in contradiſtinction to the limitedneſs of other beings. As therefore we exiſt in time, or have

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our duration limited: So ſeeing we muſt conceive of God as infinite, we muſt ſuppoſe him to be ſo, with relation to duration, in which reſpect we call him eternal, by which we mean that he ever was and muſt ever be. In like manner ſeeing all creatures exiſt ſomewhere, in a limited ſenſe, by occupying ſome part of ſpace: therefore we muſt conceive of God, as being every where, or occupying all ſpace. Now ſeeing all ſpace is an expreſſion that relates either to the creature in general, or to the Creator; and ſeeing all things created, how vaſtly and inconceivably ſoever extended, are and muſt be finite, and conſequently the place they occupy be ſo too: Hence our thoughts muſt ſuggeſt to ourſelves immenſe and unlimited ſpaces (which the ſchools call imaginary very improperly, ſeeing we are forced to believe them really exiſting), leſt otherwiſe we ſhould conceive of God as limited or confined, and no better than Anima Mundi, ſome ſoul informing or acting the world, and no more: Which, though it was the ſentiment of * ſome of the learned Heathens, yet is not

* I might prove this to be the ſentiment of the moſt refined men among the Heathens. But I chuſe to ſay ſome only, becauſe I would not divert the reader too long from the diſcourſe itſelf, by tedious citations. Let two therefore ſuffice: The firſt is Virgil, who introduceth Anchiſes preaching this in the Stygian Fields, Lib. 6. Lin. 724, &c.

Principio Coelum ac Terras, Campoſque liquentes,
Lucentemque globum Lunae, Titaniaque Aſtra,
Spiritus intus alit, totamque infuſa per Artus
Mens agitat molem, & magno ſe corpore miſcet.
Inde hominum pecudumque genus, &c.

The ſame notion he intimates alſo no leſs plainly, in the 4th Book of his Georgicon. Lin. 221.

——————Deum namque ire per omnes
Terraſque tractuſque Maris, Coelumque profundum,

not, I am ſure, the divinity either of the Old or New Teſtament. But to return, ſuch ſpaces, I ſay, we muſt ſuppoſe, unleſs we will allow, either that the created world is, in a proper ſenſe, infinitely extended, or that God is equally confined and limited, as to ſpace, as the world is. Therefore though ſuch ſpaces infinitely extended, abſtractly conſidered, may ſeem a mere chimera; yet we are forced to ſuppoſe them, or otherwiſe we muſt run into one of theſe abſurdities I have mentioned: For

Hinc Pecudes, Armenta, Viros, genus omne Ferarum,
Quemque ſibi tenues naſcentem arceſſere Vitas.
Scilicet huc reddi deinde ac reſoluta referre
Omnia: nec morti eſſe locum, ſed viva volare
Sideris in numerum, atque alto ſuccedere Coelo.

The next is the great Cato Uticenſis, as he is brought in by Lucan. lib. 9. Where, though his divinity be in this particular falſe, yet his morals being very conſiderable, and the ſoul and force of his genius, as breathing in theſe lines, admirable and almoſt inimitable: I hope it may not be looked upon as tedious, if I lay them before the reader at this time. When Labienus, therefore, preſſeth him to conſult the Oracle of Jupiter Ammon, as to the event of the war, Lucan makes him to give this anſwer, as containing the reaſons of his refuſing to do ſo. Therefore ſays the Poet,

Ille Deo plenus, tacita quem mente gerebat,
- Effudit dignas adytis e pectore Voces.
Quid quaeri Labiene jubes? An liber in Armis
Occubuiſſe velim potius, quam regna videre?
An noceat vis ulla bono?———————
Scimus, & hoc nobis non altius inſeret Ammon.
Haeremus cuncti ſuperis Temploque tacente
Nil facimus non ſponte Dei: nec Vocibus ullis
Numen egit: dixitque ſemel naſcentibus Auctor
Quicquid ſcire licet.———————
Eſtne Dei ſedes niſi Terra, & Pontus, & Aer,
Et Coelum & Virtus? Superos quid quaerimus ultra?
Jupiter eſt quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris.
Sortilegis egeant dubii, ſemperque futuris
Caſibus Ancipites. Me non oracula certum,
Sed Mors certa facit. Pavido fortique cadendum eſt.
Hoc ſatis eſt dixiſſe Jovem.———————

For we are to remember that infinite ſpace is to be looked upon as the relation that God bears to place; even as eternity is the relation he bears to duration. So that unleſs we will deny the latter of theſe, we cannot juſtly explode the former. We muſt therefore conceive of infinite ſpace, not ſo much in relation to finite beings, by which it is unoccupied, as in relation to the infinite being, to whom it is as eſſential to exiſt everywhere, as it is for limited beings to exiſt ſomewhere. Even as the notion of eternity has only a negative relation to time-lived creatures; but is the proper attribute of the infinite God. Therefore there can be nothing more unaccountable than to tell us that God is preſent no-where in regard of his eſſence, though every-where as to his power. For this I cannot but look upon as a contradiction; which infinite or immenſe ſpace, in the ſenſe I have mentioned, cannot juſtly be ſuppoſed to be: For there is no more contradiction in ſaying ſpace, in relation to God there exiſting, is infinite, though unoccupied by corporeal beings, than there is in aſſerting that God is infinite as to place, or immenſe; theſe being indeed but ſynonimous expreſſions. But to ſay, That the attribute of a being no-where exiſting, does exiſt any-where, yea every-where, is what I confeſs my poor thoughts can never apprehend ſo much as the poſſibility of. And therefore I think it much more eligible in ſuch caſes to admit of difficulties, though too hard to be diſtinctly explained, when they involve no contradiction that I can forſee, than to run into notions that do at once choke reaſon, and repreſent God diſhonourably to us, to ſay no worſe. And therefore ſeeing one eſſential diſcrimination of God from the world, or ſyſtem of created beings, is his immenſity; which denotes more than his preſence with all the cre-

ation, which is properly his ubiquity. I muſt believe it, though I cannot fully comprehend the way or modus of it.

But ſeeing we muſt think of this glorious attribute in a way ſuitable way to his nature, we muſt not allow our thoughts to form any conception thereof in a way unworthy of him. And therefore we muſt not ſuffer our imagination to become the rule of our intellect in this matter, by fancying God to be infinitely extended, as if he were a fine and tenuous body; which is altogether repugnant to the nature of an infinitely pure ſpirit. But we muſt check the exuberancy and exorbitancy of our phantaſy, by making a cloſe and exact judgment of this ſpiritual contemplation, abſtracted from all corporeal ideas, and ſay as St. Auſtin does ſomewhere; "Great is our God but without quantity or magnitude, "and therefore immenſe becauſe without theſe."

Let not therefore any man raſhly condemn this ſuppoſition, that God exiſts not only in all ſpace, where creatures are, but beyond the limits of created beings. For not only Solomon here, in the words of our text, but the Scripture, almoſt every-where elſe (where God's exiſtence with relation to ſpace or place is ſpoken of), doth conſtantly aſſert the ſame thing; when it tells us that God is not, neither can be confined within the circle of the outmoſt heavens. But if any will, after all has been ſaid, ridicule this, let me aſk them, Whether they believe the world to be, in a proper ſenſe, eternal or not? If they ſay they do, I muſt not run out into a digreſſion here, to refute ſo abſurd an opinion, which ſo many have irrefragably refuted, and which therefore is now univerſally exploded. But, if they allow the world

world to be made by God as a firſt cauſe: I then aſk them, Where God was before he made it? For ſince I have proved it to be abſurd and a contradiction to exiſt, and yet exiſt no-where; we muſt grant, that before the world was made, and conſequently before created ſpace (as it is uſually called, though I think very improperly, ſeeing it is but an accident or relation) God muſt have exiſted in infinite ſpace, if he exiſted at all, ſeeing immenſity is his neceſſary and eſſential attribute. So that to deny infinite or immenſe ſpace, is to deny the infinity and immenſity of God; and to deny theſe is to deny his being.

But to leave the diſpute of the divine immenſity, as it denotes his exiſtence in all ſuppoſable ſpace; I hope at leaſt all perſons will allow his ubiquity, or his preſence in all the parts of the world. For though the modus, or way wherein he is every-where preſent, be indeed inſcrutable, ſeeing we can never ſearch out the Almighty to perfection, Job xi. 7. Yet the thing itſelf is as certain as that God is. And therefore we muſt ſay with Job, that God is before us and behind us, and every-where round about us; though we perceive him not, Job xxiii. 8, 9. For as God created all things, ſo he ſuſtains and governs all things alſo as he pleaſeth, by which he gives us conſtant proofs of his power and Godhead. "His eyes run to and fro through the earth (as the Scripture ſpeaks), to ſhew himſelf mighty in defence of his friends, and againſt his enemies," 2 Chron. xvi. 9. and Zech. iv. 10. And yet we are not to imagine that his knowledge is further extended, this way, than his eſſence. For he is not a God only at a diſtance, but at hand and near us alſo, Jer. xxiii. 23. Therefore we muſt allow of the Pſalmiſt's reaſoning,

and

and ſay with him, " Where ſhall we go from thy preſence, O Lord? for whether we go to heaven or hell, or the extremities or center of the world, ſtill there thou art, and therefore there thou canſt eaſily find us ont," Pſal. cxxxix. 7, &c.

And therefore after all theſe ſpeculations, let us conclude this part of our diſcourſe with the excellent words of the Heathen Moraliſt. " Let us live ſo, as to re-
" member we are under the inſpection of God; and let us
" think ſo, as to conſider God ſees what is within the
" cloſet of our breaſt. For what ſignifies it, to hide
" ourſelves from men, when nothing is ſecret to God?
" For he inſinuates himſelf into our minds, and exiſts
" even in the midſt of our thoughts," Seneca, epiſt. 83.

And now having adventured to give ſome account of the divine Immenſity; I muſt deſire not only your, but God's pardon, as to what may be weak or defective in it, as well as in all other parts of this diſcourſe. And conſidering both the greatneſs and niceneſs of this ſubject, the rectification of my miſtakes, if there be any, will be the moſt grateful ſervice any man can do to one, who, next to the ambition of being better, is above all things deſirous to be wiſer and more knowing in ſuch matters.

In the mean time, ſecondly, I proceed to inquire, What ground this conſideration of the divine Immenſity doth afford us, for admiring God's condeſcenſion in dwelling with men on the earth?

And as to this I need only ſay, as I have already hinted, that beſides what I obſerved under the former pro-

propoſition, the conſideration of God's immenſity doth exceedingly greaten his condeſcenſion, in dwelling with lapſed men on the earth, as all muſt acknowledge if they do but allow themſelves ſeriouſly to conſider of this matter.

For what obligation was there upon the infinitely glorious God to ſeek the welfare of ſuch wretches as we are, after ſo baſe a defection from him? Had he deſtroyed the whole race of man, and cut them off in Adam their ſource and original, what loſs could he have ſuſtained, who needed not any thing adventitious from his worthleſs creatures? See Job xxxv. 7, 8.

Or if, to ſhew his goodneſs, he was willing to evidence his communicableneſs to creatures, in taking pleaſure in the homage they paid him: were there not millions of angels more capable to ſerve him than we; one of whom is able to deſtroy worlds of ſuch worms as we are?

And what do we know, but the * planetary worlds are replenſhed with creatures of as noble a frame as we are,

* The learned Hugenius, in his Coſmotheoros, ſive de Terris Cœleſtibus conjecturæ, pag. 14. lib. 1. gives us this account of the greatneſs of the Planets, in compariſon with the Sun; That the Ring of Saturn is to that glorious luminary, as 11 to 37; and the body of the Planet itſelf, as 5 to 37; that Jupiter is, as 2 to 11; Mars, as 1 to 166; Our Earth, as 1 to 111; Venus, as 1 to 84; and Mercury as 1 to 290. So that our Earth is the leaſt of all the Planets except Mars and Mercury (for the Moon is not one of the Planets, unleſs in a ſecondary ſenſe, being only to our Earth what the four Satellites are to Jupiter, and and the five Moons to Saturn); and very inconſiderable in compariſon of the two firſt. Nay this curious aſtronomer has told us, that after the ex-

are, who never ſinned as Adam and his poſterity have done; or, if they did, are under vaſtly different œconomies from what we are? Surely we are no more able to comprehend God's works to perfection, than we can com-

exacteſt obſervations he could make of the four Satellites of Jupiter, or the Moons that go about that vaſt world, he was forced to conclude, that each of them was as big as this world of ours. Ibid. lib. 2. pag. 101. And who can think upon theſe phænomena without wonder; when he conſiders, that ſeeing Jupiter is ſo diſtant from the Sun above what our world is, it hath this defect made up by four great Moons, whereas ours has but one? And whereas Saturn is yet vaſtly further diſtant from that great central luminary, it has not only five Satellites to give it light and heat by reflection, but a moſt wonderful luminous arch or ring, to cheriſh and refreſh it. Ibid. pag. 107, &c. Where our author ſays, that from Saturn no planet but Jupiter can be ſeen, and from Jupiter none but Saturn. So that we are not certain neither, but that there may be many more Planets than thoſe we know, even in our ſolar Vortex. And if every Star be a Sun to other worlds, in their ſeveral Vortex's, how may our thoughts of the Univerſe, but eſpecially of its Creator, grow upon us, till we are loſt we know not where? Eſpecially when we conſider what our author ſays of the vaſt extent of our Solar Vortex, where our Planetary Worlds run their circuit. "Aio igitur "(inquit ille) ſi ex Terra ad Solem Globus continue feratur (quem "ſingulis horæ ſecundis ſcrupulis, ſive Arteriæ pulſibus, centum circiter "Hexapedas conſicere experimentis compertum eſt) fere Annos 25. "eſſe inſumpturum, antequam iter hoc peragat. Ut proinde a Jove "ad Solem 125 Annis opus habeat, a Saturno 250. Ibid. pag. 125." Theſe and the like conſiderations did induce this great Aſtronomer, after many others, to think it highly probable at leaſt, that thoſe vaſt planetary worlds had not only their own ornaments, but their inhabitants alſo, to glorify God for their being and mercies.

Therefore after other conſiderations he expreſſes himſelf thus. "Itaque "quod præcipue me movet, ut rationale Animal in Planetis non deeſſe "credam, hoc eſt; Quod nimia Terræ noſtræ præ cæteris illis eſſet Præ- "ſtantia ac Nobilitas, ſi ſola Animal haberet tam longe cæteris omnibus "Animalibus nedum ſtirpibus præcellens, &c. Si nullum in Planetis eſt "ejuſmodi Animal, quid eſſe queat, quod tanti eſtimandum ſit, quove

"is

comprehend God himſelf. And therefore, ſeeing he hath adapted the Scriptures to our preſent capacity, as he did the old diſpenſation to the genius and circumſtances of the Jews: We cannot argue from the ſilence of Scripture that more worlds are not, no more than we can infer from Moſes his taking no notice of the laws of other nations, that therefore they were under none. Nay,

" is defectu penſetur? Pone in Jove majorem multo enimantium varie-
' tatem, plures Arbores, Herbas, Metalla: nihil erit in omnibus his;
" ob quæ tantum Dignitatis accedat iſti Mundo, ac noſtro propter In-
" genii Humani admirabilem Naturam. Hic ſi me Judicium fallit, fa-
" teor me pretia rerum eſtimare neſcire." Ibid. pag. 33. And who would not think as he does? For can we imagine that all theſe worlds were only made for a few mortals to gaze upon? So that we have juſt reaſon here both to admire man's folly (in being ſo much ſwallowed up with the duſt of this world, as to forget more noble things) and God's condeſcenſion, in the reſpects I have mentioned. May we not therefore ſing with a great poet?

——————————In Axem
Ipſe ſuum Phœbus ſi te ſuper Æthera tollat,
Inque diem Phaetonteæs tibi cedat habenas;
Quantula de cœli ſpectanti vertice celſo
Terra videretur, ſi cœli e vertice Terra
Ulla videretur.——————————
Terra igitur cum ſit milleſima Portio Solis:
Paris Orbis Sol parva ſui; qui continet Orbis
Solem, ſtelligeri exilis ſit portio cœli:
Stelligero Tellus ſi componatur Olympo,
Nulla queat numeris ratio comprendere Tellus.
Pars quota ſit vaſti, qui continet omnia, Mundi.
O Pudor! O Stolidi præceps veſania Voti!
Quantula pars rerum eſt, in qua ſe Gloria tollit,
Ira fremit, Metus exanimat, Dolor urit, Egeſtas
Cogit opes, Ferro, Inſidiis, Flamma atque Veneno
Cernitur & trepido fervent humana tumulta.

Georg. Buchan. de Sphæra; Lib. 1.

Nay, what if our Sun be but one of the ſtars that illuminates ſeven (and perhaps many more) planetary worlds; as the other ſtars or ſuns (which may be more in number by many millions than we imagine) may alſo enlighten and cheriſh more or fewer worlds in their ſeveral Vortex's. Surely there is nothing in revelation to diſprove ſuch ſuppoſitions: For thoſe that draw arguments againſt theſe and the like ſpeculations, from ſome popular and familiar expreſſions of ſcripture, ſeem neither to be acquainted with the figures of the Jewiſh and oriental phraſeology, nor indeed with the properties of our own language, every expreſſion of which will not allow of a rigid literal ſenſe; as E. G. when we ſay All the world knows ſuch or ſuch a thing. For ſhould any explain Chriſt's promiſe in this rigid ſenſe, that the goſpel ſhould be preached in all the world, for a witneſs unto all nations, before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, Mat. xxiv. 14.; I ſuppoſe he would never be able to make good ſuch an interpretation. And yet in like manner did the apoſtle ſpeak, when he tells us, that in his time the goſpel was preached in all the world, and to every creature under the heaven, Col. i. 6. 23. But I ſuppoſe no body will infer from thence, that America was diſcovered in the apoſtles' time; and far leſs that by creature we are to underſtand vegetative and ſenſitive, as well as reaſonable creatures, becauſe the general import of the word includes all theſe. And yet theſe, and the like expreſſions, may more juſtly be interpreted after this manner, than the ſilence of Scripture can be made uſe of as a proof that this terraqueous globe of ours is the only world that is peopled with reaſonable beings: For the aſſertion of any thing does certainly conclude as to the falſity of the oppoſite negation. But ſilence in a matter can never be a proof,

that

that the ſuppoſition of that thing which it takes no notice of, muſt needs be falſe: For how ſtrange were it for one that reads the hiſtory of England, to deny there were any ſuch places as China and Japan, becauſe he finds no mention, perhaps, made of them through the whole book.

But, ſuppoſing this little globe of ours were the only one peopled with reaſonable creatures, yet ſtill we can find no other reaſon, than that of God's mercy, why he ſhould ſubmit to dwell with men on the earth, conſidering their wickedneſs and obſtinacy. Might not he have juſtly deſtroyed our race long before now for our ſins, and raiſed up a new one from the duſt, as he had done ours before? Was not this as eaſy to him, as to have eraſed the ſeveral tribes of Iſrael, and raiſed from Moſes another and more powerful nation in their ſtead, with which he threatened the Jews once? Exod. xxxii. 10. Or could he not have turned ſtones into reaſonable creatures, if he had pleaſed, as our Saviour tells us he was able to do? Matth. iii. 9.

Nay, can we poſſibly conceive, that the infinitely-glorious God did ſet eternal limits to his own power, when he made this little world of ours, ſo as never to make any more? Certainly I ſhould think I were guilty of moſt unworthy thoughts of an infinitely wiſe, as well as powerful Being, ſhould I allow myſelf ſuch a liberty. If then it be not ſo much as ſuppoſable, that God ſhould be reſtricted to this our world: We have juſt reaſon to conclude, that he that made it, and all the vaſt creation beſides; could ſoon have made new worlds, inhabited by creatures of the like frame we are of, or of a nobler one, though he had utterly deſtroyed ours: For had he

but ſaid the word, it had been immediately done; and had he commanded it to be ſo, it had infallibly ſtood faſt.

And therefore from all theſe conſiderations it appears to be moſt wonderful, that the almighty God ſhould condeſcend ſo far to his rebellious ſubjects, as not only to ſuffer them to live, but to be willing to come down, as it were, and dwell with them here below; eſpecially if we call to mind the way wherein he is pleaſed to do ſo, according to what I mentioned under the former propoſition. I ſhall not therefore add any thing further on this head, but ſhall proceed immediately to the next head, which, from what I have already ſaid, will need, I hope, but little illuſtration: For from hence it will eaſily appear,

3dly, How we ought to improve the conſideration of God's immenſity, in order to regulate our conceptions as to the manner of God's dwelling with men upon earth, particularly in houſes made with hands.

For, after what I have ſaid as to this matter, I hope none of us can have ſo groſs a conception of the immenſe, and infinitely perfect God, as to imagine, that God can dwell with men on the earth, in ſuch a ſenſe as men are ſaid to do one with another. And therefore God's dwelling in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, is only expreſſive of this, That theſe were places ſet apart by men for the ſolemn worſhip of God, according to that ancient diſpenſation, and conſequently places where God was pleaſed to give ſolemn anſwers to his people, and ſigns of his caring for, and protection over them. This Solomon intimates in the following

part

part of our text, when he acknowledgeth that the houſe he had built could never be ſuppoſed to include or contain God. And that this was his ſenſe, appears yet more plainly in his letter to Huram, when he ſpeaks after this manner. But now when I talk to thee of building God a houſe, thou canſt not imagine that I ſhould be guilty of ſuch an abſurdity, as to ſuppoſe that any can build him a houſe ſo as to contain or confine him, or that thus, in a literal ſenſe, he ſhould dwell therein; ſeeing even the heaven itſelf cannot be ſuppoſed to do ſo. I am not ſo fooliſh, as to imagine any thing ſo ridiculous as this. No, no, all I pretend to is, to build a houſe to worſhip him in, and to offer ſacrifices unto him, 2 Chron. ii. 6. And to the ſame purpoſe does God himſelf ſpeak, in his anſwer to Solomon's prayer; "I have heard (ſays he) thy prayer, and I have choſen this place to myſelf for a houſe of ſacrifice. For which end I have choſen and ſanctified this houſe, that my name may be there for ever. And therefore I aſſure thee, that my eyes and my heart ſhall be there perpetually," 2 Chron. vii. 12, 13.

And therefore God's being ſaid to dwell in houſes made with hands now under the goſpel, is only expreſſive of this; That God will be preſent in the aſſemblies of his people, ſo as to concur with his ordinances there diſpenſed, as he ſhall ſee fit.

For if what I have ſaid was all the holineſs of the temple of Jeruſalem, which was ſo peculiarly privileged above all other places, as the houſe of God's reſidence, we may eaſily infer from hence, in what ſenſe our churches now, as we call them, can be ſuppoſed to be holy. And ſurely God himſelf doth ſufficiently determine this controverſy, when he doth ſo expreſly diſtinguiſh be-

tween

tween the relative holineſs of temples, and the real holineſs of perſons. "The heaven (ſays he) is my throne, and the earth is my footſtool: Where then is the place that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my reſt? For all theſe things hath my hand made. But to this man will I look, that is poor and of a contrite heart, and trembleth at my word," Iſa. lxvi. 1, 2. And therefore the apoſtle tells us, That God cannot be ſaid properly to dwell in temples made with hands, Acts xvii. 24.

Shall we therefore be ſo fooliſh as to confine the immenſe and infinite God to houſes of our own building; when even Solomon declares againſt it here? Or can we be ſo unreaſonable as to imagine that God did not dwell among men before that time, during the whole courſe of three thouſand years, that had elapſed from the creation to that period? Doth not God himſelf tell David, that it was to comply with his honeſt, though weak, apprehenſions of things, that he was induced to ſuffer any houſe to be built for him? "Go (ſays he to Nathan) and tell my ſervant David thus: Shalt thou build me a houſe to dwell in? Whereas, thou knoweſt, I have dwelt in no houſe ſince the time I brought my people out of Egypt, even to this day; but have walked in a tent and tabernacle. In all the places (or in all the times, as it may be as well ſupplied) wherein I have walked with the children of Iſrael, ſpake I any word to any of the tribes (or rather judges and rulers of the tribes, ſee 1 Chron. xvii. 6.) of Iſrael, whom I commanded to feed my people Iſrael; ſaying, Why do not ye build me a houſe of cedar?" 2 Sam. vii. 5, 6, 7. When therefore the Iſraelites are commanded to keep God's Sabbaths, and reverence his

ſanctuary, Lev. xix. 50. the ſenſe is plainly this: That they were to worſhip God ſolemnly upon the Sabbaths, and in the ſanctuary. So that it were ridiculous to conclude from hence (as ſome have done for the real holineſs of churches), that there was a ſanctity in ſuch times and places, abſtractly conſidered, without relation to their deſign and inſtitution, or ſuperadded to them, over and above the relation they have to God and his ſervice. Though I do readily grant, that there is much more reaſon to be given for ſome peculiar holineſs in the Sabbath-day, as it is the ſeventh part of our time, than to any place of worſhip (eſpecially now under the New Teſtament) ſeeing this is injoined by a peculiar command in the decalogue.

Now ſeeing, by all this, we ſee that the Jews never attributed more than a relative holineſs to their temple, in the ſenſe I have mentioned, and therefore were never ſo fooliſh as to fill it with any images of the ineffigiable God, far leſs with the pictures or ſtatues of angels or men (for thoſe of the cherubims, as well as thoſe of the palm-trees, were only emblems or hieroglyphics, or otherwiſe we muſt have very monſtrous ideas of things); have we not juſt reaſon to wonder, that any that call themſelves Chriſtians, ſhould under a more ſpiritual diſpenſation run back into Pagan cuſtoms, though chriſtened with other names. For not only the Chriſtian and Jewiſh inſtitutions did never allow of image-worſhip; but even the wiſer Heathens diſapproved it, and therefore commended the Moſaical law for forbidding it, as we may obſerve in * Strabo, Dion

* Strabo, Lib. 16. beſides many excellent things relating to the Jewiſh religion, has theſe remarkable words concerning Moſes; though there-

* Dion Caſſius, and others. And had it not been for the fear of an ignorant and bigotted rabble, hounded on by their ſottiſh prieſts; no doubt we had heard of many ela-

therein he exceedingly miſtakes the notion that great man had of God. Ἔφη γαρ ἐκεινος καὶ ἐδιδασκεν, &c. "He (viz. Moſes) did affirm and teach, that the Egyptians did exceedingly err, when they attempted to repreſent God by the images of wild or tame beaſts; and that the Africans and Græcians did alſo grievouſly miſtake, when they deſcribed him by human figures. For ſeeing God was no other than the univerſal nature of things; therefore he ſaid, that no wiſe man would dare to repreſent him by any ſtatue or picture: And that therefore we ought to baniſh images from the worſhip of God, and adore him without theſe in magnificent temples." And Strabo adds, That in this, all good men are of Moſes' opinion. Nay he ſticks not to ſay further, That his Inſtitutions are neither too great a burden to the purſe, nor diſagreeable to reaſon. By which he may be ſuppoſed tacitly to accuſe the Pagan rites, in both theſe reſpects.

* Dion Caſſius in his 37 book, which is the 3d of thoſe that are now extant, in the 41 page of Stephen's edition of his hiſtory, gives us this ſuccinct account of the Jews, with more impartiality than could be well expected from a Pagan. Κεχωρίδαται δε ἀπο τ λοιπον ανθρωπων, &c. "The Jews differ from other nations, as in other things, ſo chiefly in this; that they worſhip none of the other gods, but adore One only with the greateſt veneration. For while the temple of Jeruſalem ſtood, there was no image in it. Their profeſſion being this, that their God was ineffable and inviſible. In the worſhip of whom, they did exceed all mortals. To him they erected a moſt magnificent and glorious temple, which was different from all others in this, that it was open and not covered with any roof." (By which laſt words, I ſuppoſe, he may mean the court where the people worſhipped, and not the inward and moſt holy place; for this was the temple in a large ſenſe; the chamber where the ark was, being, comparatively, but a very ſmall place.) "The day which we call Saturday, they dedicate wholly to religion, and obſerve it with great ſtrictneſs, abſtaining then from all manner of work. But who this God is, whence they come thus to worſhip him, and how much they fear him, ſeeing many have written of it, and that it is foreign to our hiſtory, I ſhall paſs it by now."

elaborate diſcourſes from many of them againſt that unreaſonable way of worſhip.

But I ſhall not inſiſt further on this head, ſeeing, I hope, by this time, we apprehend not only how the conſideration of God's immenſity tends to raiſe our admiration of God's condeſcending to dwell with men on the earth; but how improveable this is alſo, to regulate our apprehenſions, as to God's dwelling with men on the earth, and particularly in places ſet apart for his worſhip. And therefore I ſhall proceed now to the third and laſt propoſition from theſe words.

III. PROPOSITION.

How aſtoniſhing ſoever it be, that God doth dwell with men upon the earth; Yet ſeeing God is pleaſed to condeſcend to do ſo, for our advantage: All men ought to reckon themſelves obliged, both to build and maintain convenient places for his ſervice and worſhip; and to do what elſe they can, that God may dwell among them.

Having already ſhewed how aſtoniſhing it is, that God ſhould dwell with men on the earth, and how great a condeſcenſion it is in him to do ſo; I am now, in the laſt place, to conſider theſe two things, which are propoſed to our meditation in this propoſition. The firſt is, that all men are obliged to build and maintain (as they are able) convenient places for the worſhip of God. And ſecondly, That they are likewiſe obliged to do what they can, that God may continue to dwell among them, and that they may conſequently receive the benefit of this privilege.

Therefore, firſt, Let us conſider the obligations all men are under, to build convenient places for the worſhip of God, when they are wanted, and to maintain them as they are able.

But here I am in doubt, whether I need do more for the proof of this, than barely to propoſe it. For if it be a duty to keep up the public worſhip of God in the world; then it is ſelf-evident hat we ought to have convenient places to perform this ſervice in: that thus we may with eaſe and convenience pay our acknowledgements to our God, and ſo ſerve him with chearfulneſs.

Let religion be looked upon, by our modern infidels and debauchees, as nothing elſe but ſham and prieſtcraft, and let them ſcoff as much as they pleaſe at the ſerious and devout profeſſion of it, as cant and hypocriſy: Yet I hope all of us here look upon it as the moſt weighty and momentous thing in the whole world. If therefore we think ſo, let us act as thoſe that are in earneſt about it: and let us do what we can to promote it among men. For without this, as I have proved elſewhere, no human ſociety can long ſtand or ſubſiſt. To which purpoſe * a learned Heathen tells us, that he be-

* Plutarch adverſus Colotem, p. 1125. E. has theſe remarkable words; Ἔυροις δ᾽ ἂν ἄπιων καὶ πόλεις ἀτειχίσους, &c. Travel where you pleaſe, and you may perhaps find cities without walls, without learning, without kings, without palaces, without wealth, without coin, without ſchools, and without theatres. But no man ever could ſay that he ſaw any city without ſome kind of temple, &c. ſome opinion of Gods, or which is altogether deſtitute of prayers, uſes no vows to the deity, or has no oracle, or the like mark of divine worſhip. Therefore he immediately ſubjoins: Αλλὰ πόλις ἂν μοι δοκεῖ μαλλον εὐδάφως χωρὶς, ἢ πολιτεια ϔ περι θεων δοξης ἀναιρεθεισης παντελως, συσασιν λαβειν, ἢ λαβοῦσα τηρησαι.

believes a city may be ſooner built without a foundation, than the ſociety that dwells there can be ſuppoſed to coaleſce and ſubſiſt without the notion of religion. See Theocraty, p. 33, &c.

If this then was the ſentiment of the Heathens, and if accordingly they were at ſuch coſt and charge to erect temples to their demons and ſenſeleſs deities, with the greateſt ſtate and magnificence: ſhall not we ſhew equal zeal, at leaſt, for promoting and maintaining the neceſſary worſhip of the only living and true God?

For though I confeſs our God is not delighted with gaudy pomp and pageantry; with which a certain ſort of men, who have loſt the ſpiritual way of performing divine ſervice, would fain patch up their lifeleſs devotion: Yet ſeeing the moral law is in force, though the ceremonial be not, and conſequently ſynagogues ought to be built, though not temples; therefore ſure I am, all Chriſtians will agree that the worſhip of God ought to be kept up in the world, however they may differ as to the form and mode of it. And therefore we cannot but aſſert the truth of this part of our propoſition; that it is the duty of all men to contribute what they can towards the building and maintaing of convenient places for divine worſhip, when they are wanted. For we are but truſtees of the temporal good things we enjoy; and are equally obliged in reaſon (though not by ſo poſitive a precept) to ſet apart ſome part (and the Scripture ſeems to inſinuate the tenths) of our eſtates for the ſervice of God, as we are required to dedicate the ſeventh part of our time to his worſhip. And if ſo, we muſt conſequently reckon it our duty to aſſiſt thoſe that labour

in the word and doctrine. For the apoſtle tells us, there was the ſame reaſon under the goſpel, to maintain Chriſt's miniſters, as there was of old for the prieſts living by the altar, as well as ſerving at the altar, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.: For, "If ye be made partakers of their ſpiritual good things, ought not they alſo to partake of your temporal good things?" Rom. xv. 27.

And truly, if we conſider theſe things aright, it is no leſs our intereſt than our duty, to do ſo. For we are ever to be mindful of doing good and communicating, ſeeing God declares ſuch ſervices to be well-pleaſing to him, Heb. xiii. 16. Nay we are told, that they that do ſo, do lay up for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, 1 Tim. vi. 19. Their mammon or worldly things (which are too often uſed as well as acquired ſo as to deſerve the character of unrighteous mammon, Luke xvi. 9.) tends to their eternal advantage, when thus improved; going up before God, for a memorial, as the alms and prayers of Cornelius did, Acts x. 4. And as ſuch good works are acceptable to God, ſo they are alſo amiable in the eyes of men, and procure to them laſting and ſolid renown, Pſal. cxii. 9. In all which reſpects ſuch benefactors of mankind have the encouragement that their righteouſneſs ſhall not be done away, 2 Cor. ix. 9. when they act in theſe things, from right principles, and for the honour of God, and the good of men. Nay as in all theſe reſpects good works, eſpecially of this kind, are profitable to men, Tit. iii. 8. So may ſuch perſons expect even temporal bleſſings on this account. Therefore Solomon adviſeth us to honour the Lord with our ſubſtance and the firſt-fruits of our increaſe, as the way

to

to procure the bleſſing of God upon us, and his adding further to our ſtore, Prov. iii. 9.

And how can we be looked upon as grateful to God for his many mercies, if we refuſe to ſerve him with what is his gift to us, when he calls for our doing ſo? Shall we grudge him a little of his own? or reckon all is loſt that we beſtow on Chriſt, and lay out for the promoting of his honour and worſhip, and the good of ſouls?

Is it not matter of ſatisfaction to think, that we are capable thus to ſerve God, and throw in our mite into his ſanctuary, eſpecially when we conſider, that even the leaſt ſervice done to Chriſt and the church from an honeſt heart, ſhall not loſe its reward? When ye are caſt upon a death-bed, my friends, and are to leave this world and all its enjoyments, I dare ſay, none of you, will ever have a ſorrowful reflection for your having laid out ſomething in order to promote religion, and the worſhip of God. Nay, when ye ſhall ſtand before the tribunal of Chriſt, I may juſtly ſuppoſe that your having this way ſincerely deſigned the good of ſouls, will be no leſs matter of ſatisfaction and joy to you, than your cloathing the bodies, and ſupplying the temporal wants of the poor: which yet our Saviour aſſures us, will be one of the greateſt evidences of mens grace and obedience then, See Matth. xxv. 34, 35. &c. Nay, let me ſuppoſe further, that God may be pleaſed to bleſs the ſtudies and endeavours of ſo poor an inſtrument as I am, to the edification and ſalvation of the ſouls of any, who may reſort to this place upon the account of the conveniency thereof: I ſay, let me ſuppoſe this, and then ye may aſſure yourſelves, that ye have reaſon to look

upon

upon this performance, as that which has given occaſion to this eternal good of ſouls; and conſequently that ye have a ſhare in it, as joint-inſtruments in this work. And will not this then afford matter of joy to yourſelves, and praiſe to God in heaven for ever?

Let me add one thing yet further on this head; that, as ye are obliged thus to maintain and promote the worſhip of God, in point of duty, intereſt and gratitude, and as that which will adminiſter comfort to you living, dying, and for ever: So ye ought to reckon it the higheſt honour God can put upon you in this world, that he capacitates you to do ſo. For if it be the higheſt condeſcenſion in God, as I have ſhewed at large, to ſuffer us to converſe with him; it is ſo likewiſe to allow us to build and maintain houſes convenient for this purpoſe. Therefore, that God put it into your hearts to deſign this work, and that he hath enabled you to perfect it, for ſo good an end, as the further advancement and propagation of the goſpel; I ſay, all this is an honour put upon you, and matter therefore of thankſgiving to God by you. And therefore, I think, we ought to remember and apply, what David ſaid on a memorable occaſion of this kind formerly: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatneſs, the power, the victory, and the majeſty. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reigneſt over all. Who then am I, and what is my people, that we ſhould be able to offer ſo willingly after this ſort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are ſtrangers and ſojourners, as all our fathers were. O Lord our God, all this ſtore that we have prepared to build thee an houſe for thy holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own," 1 Chron. xxix. 11. &c.

Now

Now what reaſon have we, upon all theſe accounts, to thank God that we have liberty and opportunity to meet together in ſuch a place for worſhipping our great and gracious God? Let us look abroad, and conſider the caſe of our poor perſecuted brethren in France, Hungary, the Palatinate, and other places; and then let us think what they would give for our liberty and privileges. Were we in the ſtead of thoſe faithful martyrs in the gallies, I am ſure we would reckon ourſelves happy, to have the opportunity to hear the word of God, though we had no better ſeat than on the threſhold or floor, or even at the feet of the meaneſt of you. Therefore I hope none of you will diſpute about places, as remembering that our bleſſed Maſter waſhed his diſciples feet; John xiii. 4. &c. to teach them, that there was no precedency, excepting that of the loweſt humility and moſt univerſal ſerviceableneſs, to take place among his followers. And that therefore ye will all follow the apoſtolical command, to eſteem each other in all lowlineſs of mind, better than yourſelves, Phil. ii. 3.

I ſhall therefore leave this head, which the preſent occaſion has brought me upon, and proceed to a momentuous and uſeful conſideration; which is the ſecond point I propoſed to conſider from this propoſition. I pray you therefore to remember, that beſides the duty we are under of building convenient places for God's worſhip, and maintaining them when built,

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We are in the ſecond place, obliged to do all we can, that God may indeed dwell among us, and that we may receive the benefit of ſo invaluable a privilege.

There

There are therefore two things further to be minded by us; 1. That we are obliged to do all we can, that God may continue to dwell among us: And, 2. That we ought to be exceedingly concerned to receive the benefit and advantage of ſo invaluable a privilege.

For to what purpoſe are we at pains and expence to build and maintain convenient places for the worſhip of God, if it be not that God may dwell among us, and not be provoked to remove the goſpel from among us? And to what purpoſe is our concern for this, if we ourſelves receive no real advantage this way?

Therefore, 1. we are to remember, That it is certainly our duty, and ought to be our concern, to have God continue to dwell among us.

We are not to look upon ourſelves as members of a congregation only, but of a city and nation alſo, nay of the world in general, and of the catholic church therein. And therefore our concern ſhould be to promote religion, with reſpect to a public good; contending thus earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints, to be ever kept by them, Jude 3.

And here I cannot but take occaſion publicly to thank God that he hath directed and aſſiſted me to act ſo, as neither to know father nor mother, country nor party, in the things of God. And as I ſpeak this without any vanity that I am conſcious of, ſo I believe ye will bear me witneſs, and all others where I have been, that I have ever carried it, as one that had no other deſign than to promote catholic Chriſtianity. Let ſome contend for parties and factions, and let the ignorance of

others

others damn us for Heretics, or their uncharitableneſs cenſure us as ſchiſmatics: We have, I hope, learned not to render evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but rather to pity their ignorance, where a miſtaken zeal influenceth them, or to pray for their converſion, where love of power or money ſways them.

Let it be our great ambition to exceed one another, and all men, in holineſs and humility. Let us ſtudy to love God with all our heart and ſtrength, and our neighbour as ourſelves, Matth. xxii. 37. &c. Let us be concerned to believe in God and Jeſus Chriſt, to life eternal, John xvii. 3. Let us found on this ſure foundation of the prophets and apoſtles, Eph. ii. 20. And let us mind to practiſe and live that holy religion, which is firſt pure, and next peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of good works, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy, James iii. 17. that thus our light may ſhine ſo before men, that it may prove influential, through the divine bleſſing, to induce them to glorify our Father which is in heaven, Matth. v. 16. Let us act thus, my friends, and then we need not value what men can ſay of us, or do unto us: For then if enemies rail, we ſhall render them bleſſing for curſing, and good words and deeds for hard ſpeeches and ill uſage. Let others then place their religion in the tythes of mint, aniſe and cummin, in garments and geſticulations, or in ſuch-like trifles: Our buſineſs, I hope, ſhall be to place ours in ſomething elſe. Nay let ſome boaſt of an uninterrupted ſucceſſion, of their popes and prelates, mediately from Chriſt and his apoſtles, but immediately from Antichriſt and his Dignitaries: We ſhall not envy them the whim of the firſt, no more than the glory of the ſecond. Let it be our concern to

mind the grand eſſentials of our holy religion as far as poſſibly we can; and let us leave to others the honour of pleaſing themſelves with the ſuppoſed decency of their forms, and the neceſſity of impoſing them.

And if we be ſhut out on ſuch pretences from outward communion with ſome whom otherwiſe we eſteem, we ſhall have this ſatisfaction, that none can exclude us from ſpiritual communion with our God and Saviour, by which we have communion with all ſaints alſo, of what denomination ſoever they be, as we are members of the ſame body, and therefore have all that communion that ſeparation and diſtance of place will allow us. Nay this way, as we have one faith, one baptiſm, one Saviour, and one hope; we have alſo union with all real Chriſtians, whether they will or not: though our different ſentiments and forms, or rather the impoſing them, be a bar as to external uniformity between them and us.

But alas, it is not differences of this kind in leſſer matters that threaten us moſt with the removal of God's converſe with us, and abode among us: but it is malice and envy, cenſuring and calumny, pride and luxury, covetouſneſs and over-reaching, curſing and blaſphemy, lying and perjury, and, in a word, ungodlineſs and profaneneſs. Therefore, if we would have God to dwell among us, we muſt do what we can to pray down and live down all thoſe evils. It is thus we are to act in our ſeveral ſtations, that we may be public bleſſings in the places where we live, and to the nations we are concerned chiefly with. And ſurely we ought more than ever to beſtir ourſelves this way, in our

ſeveral ſtations, when we ſee the ſad decay of the Proteſtant intereſt abroad in profeſſion, as well as here and every-where in practice. For, beſides that the Proteſtant intereſt has not at this time much more than half that extent of people and territory it had acquired in ſixty years after Luther's appearance, as might eaſily be demonſtrated: We have juſt reaſon to apprehend, that the old deſign of a re-union with Rome is ſet on foot by ſome, as appears but too plainly by a * book written by one that pretends to be no Papiſt.

How-

* This Book is called, "The Caſe of the Regale and Pontificate:" which I ſhall take no further notice of (far leſs of the author, or party whoſe tool he is), than to leave it to the conſideration of all ſerious and thinking Proteſtants, what ſome men are endeavouring, in order to bring in an inundation of Popery and ſlavery upon us. For, ſays this author, pag. 266. "The "whole and only difference between us (i. e. between the Church of "Rome and the Church of England), I mean that hinders communion, "is that extent of the Pope's ſupremacy, which the Gallican Church have "thrown off as well as we." As for the poor Diſſenters, he concludes them under ſuch an anathema, for diſowning the Jus Divinum of the Prelates, as they are ſuperior officers to miniſters of particular congregations, that there can be no union with them, nor conſequently with any of the Proteſtant Churches abroad, pag. 269, &c. But as for his beloved Romaniſts, though he ſays the Church of England is not guilty of ſchiſm, in ſeparating from them, as the Diſſenters are in ſeparating from her, pag. 276. yet he looks upon the idolatry and the impoſitions of the Church of Rome as ſo little and minute things, that he gives you, in pag. 259. a fair proſpect, how this ſchiſm, though not all differences, may be ended. "O, (ſays he, "in the name of one of his confabulators) that this were the time! "when that terrible ſchiſm, which has ſo long torn the Weſtern Churches, "might be healed! And though we could not, in a ſhort time, reconcile "our differences upon particular points, as of Tranſubſtantiation, Invoca-"tion of Saints, Purgatory, &c. yet that matters might be ſo adjuſted, "that theſe ſhould cauſe no ſchiſm; that is, that we might join together "in outward communion." Let the gentleman conſider how he will reconcile himſelf and the apoſtle, who would not have Chriſtians ſo much as to eat with Chriſtian idolaters, 1 Cor. v. 11. though he allows them a greater freedom as to Pagan idolaters, ver. 10. Or, if he deny the Papiſts to be idolaters, let him ſee if he can anſwer what ſome late learned writers of the Church of England have ſaid on this head. However, our author is ſo zeal-

However, if we are not able to ſtem the impetuous ſtream of wickedneſs that appears with ſo threatning an aſpect, yet at leaſt we ſhall have this ſatisfaction, that we have attempted to honour God, and promote the public peace and welfare. But I ſhall not run out further upon this ſubject at this time, but ſhall proceed to the next head, viz. to ſhew,

2. That we ought to be exceedingly concerned rightly to improve this invaluable privilege of God's dwelling among us, for our own benefit and advantage.

If private perſons ſhould reckon, that what I have been ſaying does no way concern them, becauſe they can pretend to little or no intereſt, power or opportunity, by which a public good muſt be promoted: Yet no man can have any colour of excuſe as to this matter, ſo as to think himſelf exempted from diligence and care, with reſpect to his own particular advantage, ſeeing we muſt all give an account of ourſelves to God.

Shall

ous for the healing of this ſchiſm, that if the Pope's power and the king's could be but lowered, and every biſhop made a pope in his own dioceſs, though in that ſubordination to metropolitans, primates or patriarchs, that he ſpeaks of before; but without any infraction upon the plenitude of his own power within his own church: that, I ſay, this being obtained the Chureh were ſafe and happy. Pag. 260, &c. He is indeed very zealous for the biſhops acting according to their conſciences. But he has found out no proviſion for the conſciences of other men. It ſeems he thinks, that though biſhops are not obliged to obey either kings or popes implicitly; yet the poor laity muſt own every particular prelate to be infallible, and ſubmit to them blindly, without knowing or inquiring into the reaſon why. But I ſhall not trouble the reader with more of this ſtuff; which I hope the Engliſh nation, and an Engliſh parliament will not be eaſily gulled into, to the deſtruction of all that is dear to men.

Shall our great Sovereign come down to us, and, as it were, knock at our doors, ſaying, "Open to me, and I will come in and dwell and converſe with you," Rev. iii. 20. and ſhall we refuſe ſo glorious, ſo kind, and ſo advantageous an offer? Can we be guilty of ſuch wickedneſs and folly at once, as to ſay in our hearts, to our great King and Benefactor, "Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Or can we arrive at ſuch a pitch of Demoniſm, as to give no other return to God for all his mercies and promiſes, than to declare and proclaim, in life and converſation, that we are of the principle of an ancient proud tyrant, who ſaid, "Who is the Almighty, that I ſhould ſerve or obey him?" Exod. v. 2.

If there are ſuch monſters in the world, let us be concerned for the honour of God, and the ſalvation of our own ſouls, and ſtrive who ſhall be moſt zealous and aſſiduous for the promoting and carrying on of ſuch excellent ends. How divinely do * ſome Heathens ſpeak on

* Among the many excellent things which Arrianus aſcribes to his maſter Epictetus, it may not be amiſs to take notice of a few flowers. Στρατεια τις ἐϛιν ὁ βιος ἑκαϛου, &c. Every man's life, ſays he, is a warfare. Thou art to perform the work of a ſoldier: and whatever thy general gives thee in charge, thou art carefully to perform, and as far as thou canſt, thou art even to gueſs what he would have thee do, to ſhew thy readineſs to ſerve him. Epict. apud Arrian. Lib. 3. Cap. 24. And elſewhere: I have brought my will into an entire obedience to the will of God. Is it his will, I ſhould be ſick? I will the ſame. Doth he will, that I ſhould apply my mind to this or the other thing? I do ſo. Will he have me ſeek after ſome particular thing? I make it my buſineſs to do ſo. Will he have me enjoy any thing? I will the ſame. Or does he will the contrary? I will ſo too. Ibid. Lib. iii. cap. 26. And ſo alſo he ſpeaks afterwards: I always judge it beſt, that

on this head, as if they were inſpired from above: And ſhall we fall ſhort of them who profeſs ourſelves to be the ſcholars of Chriſt? O how dreadful will our condemnation be above what others can poſſibly fall under, if after all the pains God takes upon us, and the innumerable favours we receive from him, we continue diſobedient to his will, and enemies to his intereſt in the world? So that intereſt as well as duty ought to teach us to ſeek after ſuch a bleſſing as converſe with God, by a careful improvement of the privilege of God's dwelling among us.

And for this end, let us allow our thoughts to look back and take a ſerious review of what God has done for us, in relation to our being thus privileged, in order to our preſent and eternal felicity. How wonderful was it, God ſhould preach a Saviour to apoſtate Adam immediately after the fall? and that inſtead of fulfilling the threatning, in its utmoſt extent, by annihilation or eternal puniſhments, he ſhould only ſentence men to a temporal death, unleſs their own ſins ſhould draw down further miſeries? How kind was he to reveal to men, how

that it ſhould be ſo as it is, rather than otherwiſe. Becauſe I do ever judge that to be fitteſt, which God judges to be ſo, rather than that which I might otherwiſe have choſen. I cleave to him as his ſervant, and follow him cloſe as his footman. What he deſires I deſire, whither he goes I go, and what he wills I will alſo. Ibid. lib. 4. cap. 7. I might mention many other paſſages, to this purpoſe, out of this author and others; but I muſt paſs theſe now. Only I cannot forbear to ſet down theſe lines of Seneca, which we have in his 107 epiſtle.

Duc me parens celſique, Dominator poli,
Quocunque placuit, nulli parendi mora eſt:
Adſum impiger. Fac nolle, comitabor gemens,
Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.

how and in what way they were to worſhip God, as well as to diſcover his readineſs to reward the ſincere, though imperfect endeavours and performances of his ſervants this way? And how admirable and inconceivably wonderful was the love of God in ſaving us by the death and ſufferings of his own Son? Let us conſider theſe things, and withal, what a noble and ſweet erection that of Chriſtianity is; the advantage we have, as to the age and place we live in, where we ſee the goſpel ſet in ſo clear a light, and are allowed to worſhip God according to our conſciences, without fear or diſtraction: And then ſurely we cannot enough admire the diſtinguiſhing expreſſions of the love of God we are under; eſpecially if we deſcend to particulars, and conſider how many calls of the goſpel are made to us, and how Chriſt and ſalvation are preſt upon us; how often, and clearly the ſcriptures are explained to us, and our duty and intereſt diſcovered; how ſtatedly we enjoy the goſpel-ordinances; and how by all theſe ways God is pleaſed to knock at the door of our hearts, and call us into converſe with himſelf, and to the experimental views and ſenſations of religion: For ſurely, if we conſider theſe things, we cannot but conclude ourſelves obliged, in all reſpects, to improve this great privilege of God's dwelling among us.

Nay, theſe conſiderations are not only of uſe to inforce and engage us to our duty this way, but are of equal ſervice in directing us how we may attain to converſe with God, and receive real and abiding advantage by his dwelling with us on the earth. And therefore it will deſerve our moſt ſerious thoughts, to conſider this ſubject a little more nearly and cloſely.

For

For ſeeing communion with God has been much talked of, and yet I am afraid but little underſtood, it may not perhaps be amiſs to conſider it here as diſtinctly as our little remaining time will ſuffer us. And I am the rather induced to conſider this ſubject now; becauſe, as ſome are not aſhamed to ridicule it, and with it all the ſpiritual and moſt noble part of practical religion; ſo others have ſpoken of this in ſuch a way, as to render it not only unintelligible to all, but even ridiculous to critical judgments.

Let it therefore be conſidered here, by way of preliminary, That it is ſin only that hath created that diſtance and alienation there is between God and men; and that it hath effected this, both by rendering us guilty creatures, and thereby the objects of the divine diſpleaſure, and obnoxious to puniſhments from him; and by depraving and polluting our ſouls, and producing evil habits and diſpoſitions there, from whence irregular deſires and actions do proceed. For it is eaſy to ſee, that God cannot converſe with guilty and rebellious creatures, nor communicate himſelf to corrupted ſpirits, while they continue ſo; ſeeing there can be no agreement between light and darkneſs, nor any fellowſhip between the temple of God and idols, 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15.

Now while a man is thus alienated from God, he is full of diſtruſt of God, and fearful apprehenſions of him. He walks in darkneſs, and is therefore full of diſtraction. So that it is no wonder to ſee ſuch a man terrified by the ghaſtly appearances of wrath and miſery; by which he muſt needs be haunted, upon the account of ſin, and the apprehenſions of its tendency and conſequents, unleſs

leſs he be altogether lethargical and ſtupid, a ſtate more deplorable and hopeleſs, than even that of deſpair itſelf.

But when the guilt of ſin is pardoned, and the impure heart cleanſed, then is our caſe happily altered upon the ſudden: Then do the ſhadows of the lowering and duſky evening take their flight, and the chearful morning dawns upon us, with the charming ſmiles of the divine rays that flow from the Sun of righteouſneſs, perfumed with the refreſhing breath, and cordial breezes of heavenly zephires, being uſhured in with the melodious ſongs of the celeſtial choriſters: For then God doth diſcover himſelf to the ſoul in the moſt amiable and raviſhing manner, repreſenting Chriſt in the attractive wonders of his love and kindneſs to us. So that we are made to think, that we ſee our heavenly Father and bleſſed Saviour with ſmiles in his eyes, love hanging on his lips, and his bowels rolling towards us with compaſſions and tender mercies. Theſe things captivate the ſoul, and make it fall in love with its Lord and Maſter, ſo as entirely to devote itſelf to his ſervice: For, 'God is love,' 1 John iv. 16. and therefore he that is ſwallowed up by the conſiderations and influences of this love, muſt needs dwell in God, and have God dwelling in him. And though we cannot ſee God or Chriſt by bodily eyes; yet faith ſupplies that defect, by enabling us to rejoice with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.

Then it is that fear and melancholy take their flight from us, and ſuffer us quietly and calmly to approach the preſence of our God with confidence and comfort: For by the powerful conſtraint of faith, working by love, we are led into converſe and familiarity with our God.

From whence it is that a man attains to the trueſt and ſweeteſt aſſurance of his ſalvation and intereſt in God, ſeeing this way he ſees his title and claim to heaven fully cleared up. For ſhould a man hear even a voice from the ſuperior glory, giving him the aſſurance of his compleat and final ſalvation, yet it would fall vaſtly ſhort, both of the ſtrength of evidence, and degree of pleaſure a Chriſtian receives from the cloſe view and diſtinct ſight of the real and internal impreſſions, according to Scripture-evidence, of the divine nature's being, as it were, drawn forth and copied over upon his own ſoul. And as this was the ſentiment of Peter, ſo I am perſuaded it muſt be ſelf-evident to all conſidering perſons. For is it poſſible to conceive any thing that can aſſure and certify us more of our getting to glory, than to ſee heaven already wrought within us in the firſt lineaments, as well as only ground-work of it?

Theſe things therefore being thus premiſed, I hope it will be no difficult thing to give a ſatisfying account of communion with God to thoſe that have their interior ſenſes (as the apoſtle ſpeaks) ſpiritually exerciſed to diſcern ſpiritual things, Heb. v. 14. For, as for carnal minds, it will be impoſſible for them to diſcern and underſtand rightly, what I mean by this; ſince ſin and luſt continue to blind their minds and ſtupify their conſciences. If therefore ſuch perſons apprehend not what I am about to ſay, let them remember it is the defect of the ſubject, even their own minds, and not the unintelligibleneſs of the object that occaſions this. However I ſhall endeavour to give as plain an account of this matter, even to them, as the nature of the thing, and my weak underſtanding will allow me, eſpecially conſidering the time alſo I am limited to.

There

There are two ways of converſe among men here on earth, (and there are no more ſuppoſable) viz. diſtant converſe, by letters, books, tokens, or meſſages, from one to another; and immediate converſe by diſcourſe or ſigns. And in a proportion to theſe, there are two ways alſo, in a ſpiritual ſenſe, of converſe between God and holy ſouls.

The firſt of theſe is managed and carried on, by the intervention of God's word and works, eſpecially the firſt. For what are theſe, but two great and excellent volumes, full of deep and profound matter for ſpeculation and obſervation?

As therefore a man ſends his thoughts and deſires to his friends, wrapt up in the paper-conveyance of letters and books, by which he ſpeaks to their minds through their eyes: So God ſpeaks and preacheth to the minds of thinking creatures, by his works and diſpenſations, but eſpecially by his word. For what is the Bible, but as it were a letter dictated by the Holy Spirit to proper amanuenſes and ſcribes, and directed to us; by which he ſpeaks to us, even to this day, as really as if we heard him ſpeaking with an articulate voice from heaven? And this way he is pleaſed to ſuggeſt ſuch things to his ſincere followers, as good men have not only ever thought it their duty to take notice of, but have had reaſon alſo to look upon often as the ſecret whiſpers of their God, conveyed to them by his Spirit, through the medium of his word. Though weak and fooliſh perſons have frequently, I confeſs, taken their own fancies, upon this pretence, for inſpirations. A great argument how cautious we ought to be in ſuch matters. But, to proceed:

As this way God is pleaſed to converſe with us, ſo we are called to converſe with him alſo, by meditation and prayer. For what is meditation, in this caſe, but our reading over God's letters and writings with ſerious thought and attention? And what elſe is prayer then, but our returning anſwers to what God writes to us about, by imparting to him the knowledge of our minds and determinations, and by imploring his favour and aſſiſtance, according as our wants are, and by rendering thanks to him for the mercies we have received from him? &c.

But beſides this, there is, 2dly, Another ſort of converſe between God and holy ſouls; which anſwers, in ſome ſort, to that which comes under that name here among men. For, though this doth more directly relate to the future ſtate, where we ſhall ſee, as we are ſeen; and know, as we are known; and converſe with God, as it were, face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Yet we may juſtly and with confidence ſay, both from the aſſurances of Scripture, and the experience of all truly devout and holy perſons; that there is ſomething of this kind attainable here on earth, which is known to the ſaints, and ſpoken of by them, under the notion of heavenly and divine ſenſation. Did not the apoſtle John mean this, when he aſſures us, that the ſaints had their fellowſhip with God and Chriſt? 1 John i. 3. And did not the apoſtle Paul inſinuate this, when he tells us, that the converſation of Chriſtians in his days was in heaven? Phil. iii. 20. Surely they cannot be ſuppoſed to ſpeak, in theſe and ſuch like places, of miraculous attainments, but of that which all Chriſtians were obliged to aſpire after. And I am ſure more muſt be meant

meant by them, than a bare outward profeſſion of religion and unblameableneſs of life.

I do therefore appeal here to all ſerious Chriſtians, that make conſcience of prayer and ſtrict walking before God; whether they have not felt their ſouls ſometimes brought near, as it were, to God; elevated above the world; melted down into unuſual contrition; ſeized with the utmoſt abhorrence of ſin; inflamed with the love of God, and emboldened to pour out their complaints unto God: And whether they have not, now and then, found their minds enlarged, and their mouths filled with arguments in wreſtling and pleading with God in prayer; their gratitude for mercies received increaſed; their zealous reſolutions for cloſer walking with God and further ſerviceableneſs, with a divine plerophory, renewed; their joy and comfort in believing, made more ſenſible and great than before; their former ſorrows and fears diſpelled; their title to heaven further cleared up; their view of that glory more furbiſhed and brightned; their ſins more clearly diſcovered to be pardoned; and their former prayers more remarkably and ſatisfactorily anſwered. I ſay, I appeal to all ſerious and holy perſons, if they have not, at ſometimes at leaſt, more or leſs, found ſome of theſe, or the like Chriſtian attainments, as certainly and undeniably, as they have, at other times, been conſcious of the changes of their minds, from fear to hope, and from ſorrow to joy, upon the alteration of their outward circumſtances in the world for the better.

I do not ſpeak here of extraordinary communications, ſuch as the apoſtles and prophets had of old. For I own theſe are now ceaſed. Though I muſt ſay, that

though

though theſe cannot be expected now; yet God has never ſaid, that he will reveal himſelf thus no more. Nay, if we may believe unqueſtionable relations, God has done ſo ſometimes, long ſince the ceſſation of extraordinary and miraculous gifts. But I ſpeak here only of thoſe things which we may attain unto, according to the promiſes made to all Chriſtians, if we be not wanting to ourſelves. For, as Chriſt ſays, John xiv. 23. "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him: and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Let ſome men therefore ſcoff at all this as cant and jargon, and as enthuſiaſm and fancy: yet ſtill there are ſome, and I hope many, here, who can ſet to their ſeal, with me, to the atteſtation of the certainty of this truth, were this required.

Let me therefore put you in mind of this, That religion is not a ſyſtem of notions, but a practical thing. For I am ſure that the experience of its power upon your ſouls will give you a clearer idea of it, than all the books of the world can do. Therefore, when our Lord Jeſus came to teach us our creed, he did not think fit to draw it up into any methodical ſcheme or diſcourſe. Nay ſo far was he from doing ſo, that neither he nor his apoſtles would ſo much as form any compend or confeſſion of faith to be ſubſcribed by us, or impoſed upon us. For his deſign was not to fill the world with diſputes, or to ſtart controverſies to anſwer them again, in order to ſtock the world with notions and opinions. No, no; his deſign was more noble and ſublime, more generous and divine, viz. to promote piety and a holy life, as the beſt way to attain unto the true knowledge and belief of divine truths.

And

And therefore he tells us, John vii. 17. That the way to know the doctrine which he preached, was to do it. So that, as the reconciliation lays the foundation of communion with God: So a close and exact obedience, holiness and devotion, is that by which a man is capacitated actually to maintain and increase communion and fellowship with God.

Having therefore now given you a sufficient account, as I humbly hope, of this great subject of communion with God; I may, perhaps, be thought to have, in a great measure, directed you by it, how ye may receive the benefit and blessing of God's dwelling with you; and that therefore I ought to detain you no longer on this head. Yet, since I proposed to consider, how we are to improve the great privilege of God's dwelling among us, in relation to the public worship of God, for which end this house is built: I hope it will be no useless inquiry, to give you a few thoughts further this way.

Let it therefore be seriously considered by you, that it will be a sad matter, if after all the pains and expence men have been at in making this place convenient for the administration of God's ordinances, and the great pains God has taken otherwise to renew and reform you: I say, if after all this, ye continue as wicked and Godless as other men, and perish at last.

Therefore let me entreat you to labour after communion with your God in public ordinances, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. And therefore let me suggest a few things to you, which I hope may be exceedingly useful to you, through God's assistance.

When

When therefore ye come to worſhip God, and attend upon his ordinances in this houſe; be careful, in the firſt place, to conſider ſeriouſly with whom ye have to do. Take heed to yourſelves, that ye offer not the ſacrifice of fools before God, ſeeing he is your witneſs now, and will be your judge hereafter. Ye profeſs in coming here, to worſhip and glorify God. Act therefore accordingly, to the honour of God, and for your own good.

In the next place, be concerned to employ yourſelves wholly in the ſacred work ye are here engaged in. What petitions or thankſgivings are put up to God, join in; eſpecially ſuch as do ſuit your own caſe, and expreſs your wants or mercies moſt. Aſſent to ſuch truths as ye ſee to be Scriptural ones; and examine if what we ſay of them be conſonant to that divine ſtandard: for I am far from deſiring you to believe me upon my ſingle teſtimony, unleſs I can give you ſufficient evidence for the ſame. Give your hearty and ready conſent to the goſpel calls and invitations, and accordingly come off from ſin and Satan to Chriſt and his ſervice, and embark yourſelves wholly on this bottom of your Saviour's merits, as the only ſecure foundation of ſalvation and eternal life. When ye hear of the threatenings of God's word againſt ſinners, and of the miſeries prepared for them; ſtand in awe, and ſin not, but break off entirely from all pernicious counſels. When promiſes are inſiſted upon, explained and improved, rejoice in the goodneſs of God thus manifeſted to you; and aſſent to the verity of them, and plead them in prayer in the time of your need. Yield a ready compliance with the commands of God, when explained and urged upon you, and reſolve to model your lives accordingly, to the

praiſe

praiſe of God, and the honour of your holy profeſſion. And as ye are obliged to yield entire obedience to all the commands of God, ſo particularly to that which Chriſt calls his New Commandment, that we love one another, John xiii. 34, 35. For this is the badge of our profeſſion, by which all men may attain to know if they are Chriſtians indeed. But, alas! where ſhall we find true Chriſtians, if this be the mark and evidence of ſuch? Let us therefore be the more concerned, to approve ourſelves to be Chriſtians indeed, by loving the brethren, even though they differ from us in a great many little things. For if we do not ſo, how can we juſtly conclude that we are paſt from death to life? And how can we ever, without this, attain to fellowſhip with God here on earth, or in heaven hereafter? But if it be our buſineſs thus to mind religion in earneſt, we may juſtly hope to have communion with the Father, and the Son, both now and for ever.

And now I am come to the end of what I had to ſay to the three propoſitions I laid down to be conſidered; which I may be perhaps ſuppoſed to have inſiſted upon ſo largely, that any thing further by way of application, may be looked upon as ſuperfluous, if not impertinent. But I hope ye will bear with me on this occaſion, ſeeing in all probability we ſhall never have the like again, if I preſume to treſpaſs yet further upon your patience, by recommending to you the practical conſideration of our holy religion, by way of concluſion; which is all the application or improvement I ſhall make of it.

The Conclusion.

LET your thoughts therefore, my friends, go along with me, and take a view of our holy Chriſtian-profeſſion, from this eminent head thereof, which we have been conſidering: For from this pinnacle we may ſee the whole frame of this ſpiritual edifice; ſeeing the communion and converſe of God and men is that about which all religion is converſant, and to the advancement of which, here and hereafter, it is wholly calculated. And therefore I hope the general conſideration of this grand ſubject here (to the illuſtration and advancement of which, all particular truths are ſubſervient, conducting us thither, as the rivers do to the ocean from whence they flow), will be found to be no leſs proper for a concluſion, eſpecially conſidering the occaſion, than leſſer inferences and particular uſes would have been. And I do much miſtake, if what I am about to ſay, will not be found to be as uſeful, if not more than the common and vulgar way of improving ſuch-like truths.

There are three grand conſiderations of our religion, which we may properly be led to think upon, from the ſubject already diſcourſed of, and which may, I hope, be of very conſiderable uſe to us, both by giving us a diſtinct idea of Chriſtianity, and by confirming us in the verity of it, and conſequently by making us fall more in love with it, in order to practiſe it, and purſue the deſign thereof. For the conſideration of the nature, of the certainty, and of the excellency of religion, is what I am now in queſt of.

And, I. What we have ſaid of God's dwelling with men on the earth, doth exceedingly tend to clear up the notion of religion to us; ſeeing religion muſt be ſuppoſed, not only to be conſiſtent with this end, but to be ſomething that is directly calculated by God to ſubſerve and promote ſo great and beneficial a deſign as this is, of God's dwelling with us, and our being admitted to communion with him, both in time and for all eternity.

Now our religion is conſidered two ways, viz. either cauſually, or rather inſtrumentally, as it is a doctrine revealed to us, in order to lead us unto God for our happineſs; or, finally and effectively, as it denotes a holy frame of ſoul, this way produced in us, by which we ſtudy to pleaſe God, to converſe with him, and to be happy in the enjoyment of him. And both theſe ways we may attain to form a genuine idea of religion, from what I have ſaid before concerning God's dwelling with men upon the earth.

For, as to the firſt conſideration, we may from thence ſee, That religion is a doctrine revealed by God to men in the Scriptures, concerning the knowledge of himſelf in Chriſt, neceſſary and ſufficient to ſalvation, and wholly calculated to make us holy and happy, here and hereafter, by leading us into the enjoyment of God and Chriſt.

This definition or deſcription of religion, doctrinally conſidered (which the apoſtle calls, by a compendious way of ſpeaking, 'The doctrine according to Godlineſs,' 1 Tim. vi. 3. and elſewhere, 'The truth according to Godlineſs,' Tit. i. 1.), will deſerve your ſerious meditations: for I do not apprehend that there is one

word redundant or ſuperfluous, nor any thing wanting or defective in it.

For this deſcription of our religion will let you ſee the difference there is between it and that which we call natural religion, in as far as this is a revealed doctrine. It will lead us up to the author of it, ſeeing it is revealed by God. It will ſhew us our concern in this doctrine, ſince it is given out to men. It will put us in mind, where this is to be found, ſince this revelation is only in the Scriptures. It will ſatisfy us, as to the great ſubject of this doctrine and revelation, that it is all concerning the knowledge of God himſelf, and that in Chriſt, to denote the peculiarity of the goſpel-œconomy now. I ſay alſo, that this is neceſſary to ſalvation, to ſhew how weak and inſufficient mere nature is without it; and to put us in mind, that it is ſo abſolutely to us who live under the diſcoveries of it; though I meddle not with the ſtate of Heathens, who are to be judged another way than we. And I ſay, that this is ſufficient to ſalvation, that I may aſſert the perfection of Scripture, and the revelation contained therein, in oppoſition to the ſuppoſed imperfection thereof, without traditions and determinations of Popes or Councils, or the like fancies of ſome men. And, I ſay, moreover, in this deſcription, that revealed religion is wholly calculated to make us holy and happy here and hereafter, to ſhew what the great end and ſcope thereof is, with reſpect to us. And after all, I thought fit to ſpecify how and in what reſpect it makes us reach theſe ends (and wherein alſo both holineſs and happineſs doth conſiſt), by adding, that it does ſo, by leading men into the enjoyment of God and Chriſt: for this is the only

only way to be both holy and happy, as well as that wherein theſe do ſtand.

So that it doth plainly appear from all this, That the nature and tendency of the Chriſtian religion, is to improve the minds and ſouls of men, by rendering them fit for divine communications, that God may indeed dwell in their hearts and lives, and that accordingly they may have fellowſhip with the Father and with the Son. And this leads me to conſider religion effectively, as it denotes a holy diſpoſition of ſoul, wrought there by the Spirit of God, impregnating goſpel-conſiderations to us by his own ſecret but efficacious working.

Now, as to this ſecond conſideration of religion, I ſhall not diſpute here how or in what way it is wrought, ſeeing all muſt allow that there is ſuch a thing, as is too plain to be denied, from what account we have of the holy and heroical lives and deaths of martyrs and ſaints, many of whom were both the wiſeſt and moſt learned men of the world.

I ſhall therefore only attempt to give you ſome idea of religion under this conſideration, as I have done with reſpect to the former. And in order to this, I muſt put you in mind of that deſcription of religion, in the general notion of it, abſtracting from the Chriſtian, which I gave the world in a former diſcourſe. The deſcription was this: "That religion is a ſerious concern, and ſtu-
"dious endeavour to ſeek after God and come unto him,
"in that way, which we think will be moſt acceptable
"and pleaſing to him, and conſequently effectual to
"reach the end deſigned: And all this proceeding from

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"a right apprehenſion and firm belief of God's being "and beneficence, and from a juſt ſenſe of our depen- "dence upon him, and accountableneſs to him, and of "our being deſigned for a future ſtate, and conſequently "of our being to be rewarded or puniſhed there, ac- "cording to our life and behaviour here, with reſpect "to the above-mentioned concern and endeavour." See Theocraty, p. 14. Now a very ſmall alteration in this deſcription, by adding what is peculiar to the Chriſtian religion, will make it a proper definition thereof. For what other idea can we form of Chriſtianity, taken in this ſecond ſenſe, but this; That it is a ſerious concern, and ſtudious endeavour, to ſeek after God and come unto him, in order to enjoy him, and have communion with him, in that way which our Lord Jeſus has revealed and preſcribed, as that which is only acceptable and pleaſing to him, and conſequently effectual to reach the end deſigned: and all this proceeding from a right apprehenſion and firm belief, both of God's being and beneficence, and of Chriſt's miſſion into the world, his ſuffering for us there, and aſcenſion again to heaven; and ſo of our acting in a dependence upon him, and as accountable to him, as perſons deſigned for a future ſtate, and conſequently of our being to be rewarded or puniſhed there, according to our life and behaviour here, with reſpect to the above-mentioned concern and endeavour.

I hope this account both of religion in general, and of the Chriſtian religion in particular, will be ſatisfactory to all thoſe that are deſirous to have a diſtinct notion and idea of ſo momentuous a thing, with reſpect to the regulation of their lives accordingly. For this is indeed the ſum of the deſcription of religion, under this laſt ac-

acceptation of it; That it is the governing principle of good men, both as to their thoughts and affections, and their words and actions. And that it may be ſo to us, in order to our being made both holy and happy, that God may dwell with us, and in us, and we attain to dwell with him here and for ever, is the great end I propoſed to myſelf, in taking all this pains to be ſo accurate and exact, in this account of things which I propoſe to your moſt ſerious thoughts, in order to be further ſtretched out and improved by all of you.

And in order to this, I ſuppoſe ye will eaſily ſee from hence, That religion is ſomething more generous and noble, than moſt men ſeem to apprehend. For from both theſe deſcriptions of religion, it doth plainly appear, that they do exceedingly err, who imagine that it is nothing elſe but a fine ſpeculative ſcience, conſiſting in high notions, without any immediate relation to practice: And that they do no leſs miſtake its nature and deſign, who place it wholly in an external profeſſion, when the ſcope of it is not ſo much to intitle us to the name of Chriſtianity, as to make us Chriſtians indeed. And from hence alſo it does do leſs plainly appear, That ſeeing ſo great a change is this way effected on the ſoul, Chriſtianity can never be ſuppoſed to conſiſt in the diſcriminative name and rituals of a party; ſince all perſons, of whatever denomination or nation, are accepted, who fear God, and work righteouſneſs, Acts x. 35, 36.

II. I proceed now to conſider the certainty of our holy religion, from what I have ſaid. Not that I pretend here to prove the truth of Chriſtianity, againſt Atheiſts and Deiſts, which many have done to good purpoſe of late,

late, and which I ſpake alſo ſomething to, againſt the firſt of theſe enemies eſpecially, in a diſcourſe which I have already once and again referred unto, Theocraty, p. 15, &c. For my deſign here is only to confirm thoſe, who believe and aſſent to what I have already ſaid concerning God's dwelling with men upon the earth: That our holy religion is indeed every way divine. And this I ſhall do from two conſiderations, that may be of uſe to ſtrengthen the faith of thoſe, who are not already abandoned to ſcepticiſm on ſo weighty and momentuous a truth as that we have diſcourſed of.

The firſt conſideration is, That there is nothing more conſonant to the divine perfections, than our religion: and that upon this account it ſeems unqueſtionably to own God for its author and original.

And as to this, I ſhall only appeal to mens own reaſon and conſcience, if they can imagine any thing that tends more directly to exalt the ſovereignty of God over all his creatures, as to his creating, preſerving and governing them as he ſees fit: Or if they can find any doctrine that gives us a more juſt repreſentation of God's unſpotted holineſs and righteouſneſs. And what religion can be found, that raiſes us to ſo noble an idea of God's nature and attributes, and to ſo juſt an admiration of him? For is it poſſible, that any thing can more exalt the greatneſs and power of God, or his wiſdom and ſapience, or his love and goodneſs, or his truth and faithfulneſs, than this revelation of God doth? ſeeing Chriſtianity is wholly founded on theſe attributes, eſpecially as they concur to the making up that maſter-piece of God's providence and government, viz. the incarnation of Chriſt and the ſalvation of ſinners this way: for

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in this all the perfections of God do moſt eminently ſhine forth. So that God, being the ſupreme good, and communicative of himſelf to reaſonable creatures, who are made capable of ſuch intercourſe with him: may we not conclude, ſeeing all other religions are ſo unworthy of God, excepting this only; that therefore this is indeed the genuine production and iſſue of his beneficence to men, and therefore diſcovered to them, in order to their ſalvation?

The ſecond conſideration is this, That there is nothing more agreeable to right reaſon, than this revealed religion is.

For what has any man been able to diſcover in this, that choaks reaſon, or is inconſiſtent with it? I know indeed many Heathens of old, as well as Jews and ſceptics of late, have attempted to find flaws in it. But it is as true, that they have been unanſwerably refuted, to their own ſhame, and the confirmation of Chriſtianity. For indeed, though this religion do contain ſeveral truths too high for us fully to comprehend; yet there is nothing to be found in it, that is any way contradictory or abſurd. And it is ſo admirably accommodated to our reaſon and way of thinking, that it ſeems for the moſt part to be built upon nature itſelf, though not as now corrupted, but as pure and refined: and that in ſo admirable a manner, as to agree with the weakneſs of the moſt ordinary underſtanding, at the ſame time that it gives ſcope to the higheſt flights of learned ſpeculations. And as to thoſe things that ſome men would fain expunge out of their creed, as unintelligible myſteries: I would fain aſk them, if it be any more unreaſonable that an infinite Being ſhould reveal

to us ſome things as certain, which we cannot fully comprehend; than it is, that an infinitely capacious mind ſhould underſtand more than our limited and poor thoughts can exactly apprehend. Therefore after all men can ſay, it is to me a great argument for the divinity of the Scriptures, and the religion therein revealed; that, notwithſtanding the ſublimity of many things therein diſcovered, there is not one to be found, that, upon a modeſt and impartial ſurvey, can be juſtly ſaid to involve any abſurdity or contradiction. And this I durſt venture to make good; were it not that this would carry me out too far at this time, and that I hope there is no need for ſuch a diſcourſe to this auditory.

And now I hope I have ſaid enough, to evince the certainty of our Chriſtian profeſſion to thoſe that are not Deiſts or Sceptics, upon this head. And therefore I may venture to proceed to conſider the excellency of it: which is the laſt thing I am to ſpeak to, in this epilogue.

The III. thing therefore to be conſidered, at this time, is the excellency and valuableneſs of the Chriſtian religion.

And though this doth ſufficiently appear from all the preceding diſcourſe, and particularly from what we ſaid as to communion with God: Yet I hope it may not be amiſs to add ſomething here, that may induce you further to fall in love with religion, in order to practiſe the ſame.

Now the excellency of religion cannot be better known, than by its effects: for from theſe doth the Scrip-

Scripture itſelf receive its eulogies and commendatory epithets; as when it is ſaid, to make the ſimple wiſe, to convert the ungodly, to ſanctify the ſoul, and to make a man more excellent than his neighbour, Pſal. xix. 7, 8, 9. Prov. xii. 26. For religion is the way of life, and is above to the wiſe, that he may depart from hell beneath, or from the loweſt hell, as the Hebrew ſeems rather to import, and as the Chaldee Paraphraſe and Syriac verſion read the place, ver. 15. 24. So that there are two things in religion ſuggeſted to us in theſe words, which will abundantly diſcover its excellency; viz. that it is above to the wiſe, as tending to the elevation and ſpirituality of their ſpirits; and that it is this way they are ſaved from the lower ſchool or hell, even the infernal pit.

Therefore, firſt, The excellency and valuableneſs of religion appears in this; that it enlarges all the faculties of the ſoul, and makes them more ample, noble and free. It widens and dilates a man's ſoul, and gives as it were a new ſoul to him; by brightning and enlightning the mind, by procuring liberty to the will from whatever tended to enſlave it and make it run too much biaſs, and by inſpiring and quickening all the wheels of the ſoul's motion.

So that true religion enlarges and greatens the ſoul in all its actings. For the nearer a man comes to God, who is infinite in all perfections, and continually acting accordingly; the vaſter and more unbounded will he find his ſoul to be. So that, to be ſtraitened in our minds, narrowed in our ſouls, and confined in our apprehenſions and affections and actions, is a ſign of a

man's being ſlenderly, if at all, tinctured with religion.

For a true Chriſtian cannot be ſatisfied with any thing leſs than God; his enlargement of ſoul being ſuch, that the whole world cannot fill or ſatisfy its deſires. For when a man is thus become, if I may ſay ſo, maſter of himſelf, and is reſtored to the true poſſeſſion of his own faculties and powers, he can be bounded no longer by, or confined within the limits of mundan enjoyments. The wide world, as we call it, becomes then but as a priſon to him, and the whole ſphere of mortality is too narrow for his aſpiring thoughts. This elevated and great ſouled champion does not weep for more worlds (as is famed of a * great robber of the world of old, who a little after found a coffin large enough to contain him), but ſcorns it and ten thouſand more, upon the ſuppoſition they were: for nothing leſs than God himſelf, the infinitely perfect and glorious God, can ſatiate his ſoul, and content his mind.

And therefore he lives above himſelf as well as all other things: denying himſelf as well as undervaluing all created things, in order to enjoy his God. He reſigns himſelf to God, in order to enjoy him. And we may

* This was Alexander the Great. Of whom Juvenal ſays in his 10th Satyr;

Unus Pellæo Juveni non ſufficit Orbis.
Aeſtuat infelix anguſto limite Mundi,
Ut Gyaræ clauſus ſcopulis, parvaque Seripho.
Cum tam a figulis munitam intraverit urbem
Sarcophago comentus erit. Mors ſola fatetur
Quantula ſint Hominum corpuſcula.

may eaſily imagine, how our ſouls muſt be enlarged, dilated and greatned, after we are elevated to the enjoyment of God, though this be according to our weak meaſure, gradually and by various ſteps.

But by denying ourſelves, and acting thus, we come to be reſtored to a juſt dominion and power over ourſelves, by overcoming our ſins and paſſions. And in nothing more than in this doth the wonderful efficacy of religion appear. And O! how glorious is it to experience this in ourſelves: to find, I ſay, reaſon giving up the ſcepter to the gentle ſway of religion, and from thence receiving commiſſion again to ſubdue the unruly motions of ſelf-will and paſſion. For from this time ſweet peace takes poſſeſſion of the ſoul, inſtead of the tyrannical luſts that lorded over it before. And how delightful then muſt the change be, when, inſtead of the wild and confuſed rule of avarice, malice, laſciviouſneſs and pride, men become heavenly, mild, holy and humble?

In this ſurely ſtands the moſt noble conqueſt of the ſoul, when a man becomes maſter of himſelf, and finds pure religion and calm reaſon at the helm, piloting his life through the unſtable ſea of this world. And this is the happy revolution that religion makes in us, when it is ſubmitted unto. For while other men are ſlaves to ſin, folly, and vanity; the truly pious ſoul is above all theſe. So that, in all reſpects, religion muſt be looked upon as the only * cauſe and original of true nobility and magnanimity of ſoul: for it is only pious per-

* ——Nobilitas ſola eſt atque unica Virtus.
JUVEN. Sat. 8.

perſons, that can ſay with Paul, We can do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengthens us.

And from hence it is, that pious ſouls are ſtirred up and encouraged to act, as public-ſpirited perſons in the world, in defence of the church, and for the intereſt of all good men, without confining themſelves, as others do, to the little concerns that relate only to themſelves. For as an † eminent and ancient Chriſtian author ſays, "This is looked upon to be the firſt work of a religious "man's righteouſneſs, to love thoſe who are of the "ſame claſs with himſelf, and to have communication "and converſe with them, both on earth and in heaven. "And hence he freely gives to them, and beſtows upon "them what he has, as he is able. And ſeeing he is "friendly and bountiful this way, he muſt needs hate "thoſe that are wicked, ſeeing he hates every thing "that is evil: For he is careful to act faithfully to "himſelf, to his neighbour, and to the commands of "God. He then is the ſervant of God, in a proper "ſenſe, who ſubjects himſelf voluntarily to the divine "precepts. But he that does not ſo much obey theſe "becauſe commanded, as love them becauſe he ſees "them to be excellent, is the man that is moſt pure "in heart, and is therefore moſt truly the friend of "God."

But, 2dly, The excellency of religion doth alſo appear in this, That it tends to make us happy both here and hereafter.

For

† I mean Clemens Alexandrinus; the ſenſe of whoſe words I have given, as they may be found in his Strom. lib. 7. p 709. C. Δικαιοσυνη γαρ αυτω πρωτον ἐργον, &c.

For religion does not only enter a man into the way that leads to felicity and life eternal, but tends alſo to carry us on perpetually towards the ſame. It does indeed dawn pleaſantly upon us at firſt: But it does likewiſe ever after, ſhine more and more, towards the perfect day. And not only ſo, but it carries us along alſo with itſelf, all the while we live in this world, until it land us in a better, and till we ſet with it, in the bed of perpetual reſt and peace.

Therefore after it has directed and aſſiſted us to make our peace with God, and elevated our ſpirits above terrene and fading things, it leads us in to act ever afterwards as his devoted friends and ſervants. And from hence we find true ſerenity and peace of mind wrought in us, together with the pureſt and moſt ſatiſfying contentment and joy, and our thoughts and affections this way mellowed down into the ſweeteſt compoſure and harmony. By which religion is found to conduce much even to our outward happineſs in this world, by obliging and aſſiſting us to walk wiſely, ſoberly, meekly, and humbly: And therefore muſt be ſuppoſed much more to tend to our eternal bliſs, as leading us in to glorify and enjoy God, both in this world and the next. For it takes us off from low and mean ends, deſigns and intereſts, and makes us mind the great things wherein our true and laſting felicity doth conſiſt.

And now, my dear friends, I have led you from the particular conſideration of God's dwelling and converſing with men upon the earth, to the general conſideration of religion itſelf. But I have not yet reached my end in this, till I have led you from hence back again

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(and, I hope, with a great deal of advantage, after what I have ſaid on this head, as well as the former), to conſider what God doth require and expect from you, as to practice. For to what purpoſe do we know theſe things, unleſs we act accordingly, and make religion our buſineſs indeed: ſeeing this, even doctrinally conſidered, is wholly calculated for practice, and in a final ſenſe, is holineſs and practice itſelf?

Hence we find, that God, in his word, doth ever repreſent this as a practical thing. Enoch and Noah's religion is deſcribed to be a walking with God, or a ſtudious concern to pleaſe him, Gen. v. 24. and vi. 9. compared with Heb. xi. 5. And Abraham is commanded to walk before God, and ſo to ſeek after true perfection, Gen. xvii. 2. And thus Iſrael is enjoined to walk after the Lord, in obedience to his holy law, Deut. xiii. 2. For what does God require of man, as the prophet Micah ſays, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God, Mic. vi. 8. And, we Chriſtians are required to walk ſo, as Chriſt gave us an example, 1 John ii. 6. and to walk in the Spirit, as an evidence that we live in it, Gal. v. 16, 25. that ſo we may attain to walk in all the commandments of God blameleſs, Luke i. 6 and Job i. 1. 8.

So that, from all this, we may ſufficiently ſee, how much God requires and expects of us; that we ſhould make religion our buſineſs, and approve ourſelves to be the ſincere and faithful ſervants of our Lord and Maſter, by living over all that knowledge of divine truth he has given us; in order, firſt, to attain unto that communion with God and Chriſt which the Scripture ſpeaks of, and then to maintain it; which is beſt done by an

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even and close walking with God, according to the tenure and scope of his holy laws and institutions. In order to which, pray consider seriously what the character of a true Christian is, as it is deducible from the word of God. And for this end accept these few hints from me at this time; which may perhaps be serviceable to your further and closer thoughts on this subject.

A true Christian then, with whom God dwells, and who hath fellowship with the Father and the Son, is one that, besides the outward baptism with water, is internally baptized by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 5. Being thus born, not according to the flesh, or the will of man, but of God, John i. 13. And therefore he is careful to be really what he makes profession of.

And seeing the mind must be cultivated and improved, in order to the right regulation of the life: He is careful to examine and try things by Scripture and sober ratiocination, that he may not be imposed upon, or take things on trust, 1 Thes. v. 21. For he reckons it a mean and unworthy thing, for a Christian to be able to give no other account of the principles of his religion, than Pagans and Mahometans do, viz. that his parents were of that persuasion, and taught him to be so, and that it is the religion of his country. Therefore he studies the word of God diligently and humbly (Psal. i. 2.), in order to embrace the truths thereof, upon conviction and a rational choice, from satisfactory evidences of their certainty; as well as from the purity of its precepts, and the exceeding great reward exhibited in its promises.

Hence he cannot allow himſelf to believe that to be his duty, which God expreſly declares againſt. And, therefore, though all the world ſhould agree to recommend idolatry, as the beſt way of worſhip, he dares not fall in with them, whatever the conſequence of his diſobedience to men, on this ſcore, may be ſuppoſed to be, 1 John v. 21.

Nor can he ſee any juſt reaſon for his believing things contradictory and abſurd, merely upon human authority or for ſecular ends. For he judges, that as faith is the evidence of ſpiritual things, which we muſt believe upon the credibility of the relater (Heb. xi. 1.); ſo our ſenſes are the proper judges of their own objects. And, therefore, he thinks it far better to interpret ſome expreſſions of Scripture in a figurative or ſpiritual ſenſe, than to adhere rigidly to the letter, when the ſenſe is unintelligible. See John xv. 1, 2, &c. and ii. 19, 21.

And yet he is not ſo preſumptuous and proud, as to meaſure all things revealed to us, by the weak line of his own intellect, 2 Cor. x. 5. For as he concludes it abſurd to deny his own being, becauſe he is not able fully to comprehend how he is made and doth ſubſiſt and act: So he thinks it much more unreaſonable, to deny things relating immediately to God, when he gives us the fulleſt aſſurances of them, merely becauſe we cannot fully comprehend how they are.

Therefore he is no ſceptic, toſſed to and fro with every objection againſt religion, far leſs with the fooliſh jeſts that profane wits make uſe of to ridicule it, Eph. iv. 14. But having received the truth, he ſtands faſt in

in it, Phil. iv. 1. And wherein he doubteth, makes ſerious and ſober inquiry; that thus he may come to be more fully eſtabliſhed in the faith, and that ſo his obedience to God may be his reaſonable ſervice, and not a blind devotion, Rom. xii. 1.

Neither is he an enthuſiaſt, expecting or pretending to immediate revelation, when his intereſt and duty is ſo plainly diſcovered to him in the Scriptures, 1 John iv. 1. that he ſees no need any Chriſtian has of ſuch an extraordinary way of teaching, far leſs any ground given him to expect it, 2 Pet. i. 19.

And yet he is careful not to run to the contrary extreme, by imagining that the Spirit of God has withdrawn himſelf from the church, as to ordinary operations, as well as extraordinary gifts, Rom. viii. 9. Jude 19. For the ſenſe and experience of his own wants and impotence, oblige him continually to breathe after, and carefully to wait for the benign and ſweet influences of the Holy Spirit; in order, this way, to be led into all truth, to be aſſiſted in all the ſteps of his ſpiritual journey through the world, and to be rendered fit for communion and fellowſhip with God, Gal. v. 22.

He is no ſolifidian, that hopes to be ſaved by a chimerical faith that is barren of ſpiritual fruit, James ii. 17, 18. But he is zealous of good works, as being acceptable to God, honourable to religion, profitable to men, and neceſſary to ſalvation, Tit. ii. 14.

Yet he dares not place his religion in mere morals or externals, Mat. xxiii. 23. 25. 27. But is careful to act from right principles, and particularly from faith,

as knowing that what proceeds not from thence is ſin, and that if God ſhould narrowly watch his actions, he muſt be for ever undone, unleſs God accept of them for Chriſt's ſake.

Therefore he is wholly dead to himſelf, as to the expectation of ſalvation by what he can do, Phil. iii. 8, 9. For his concern is, that Chriſt may be made, of God, unto him, both wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30.

Hence he makes all his approaches to God, by the one Mediator, the Man Jeſus Chriſt (1 Tim. ii. 5.), without preſuming to any merit in himſelf, or making uſe of any others as ſub-mediators either of atonement or interceſſion, by a voluntary ſubmiſſion, which God has given us no ground for. For he comes to God himſelf as to his gracious Father, reconciled in Chriſt; as one that he knows is ready and willing to accept poor creatures that come unto him this way.

He is the ſame in private that he is in public, the ſame in his cloſet as in the church, being concerned to walk within his houſe, as David did, with a perfect heart, Pſal. ci. 2. and to approve himſelf to God, as well as to men, by keeping a conſcience void of offence to both, Acts xxiv. 16.

He joins ſerioufneſs with chearfulneſs, being ſeriouſly chearful, and chearfully ſerious, as aiming at a compoſed and ſerene temper of mind and ſpirit always, Pſal. ii. 11. For he knows he has to do with ſerious as well as excellent things; and therefore thinks a great

* great man had juſt reaſon to ſpeak as he did to ſome that wondred at his retirement: "Ah, ſaid he, while "we laugh, all things are ſerious round about us: "God is ſerious in all his works and providences; "Chriſt is ſerious in his goſpel-offers and diſcoveries; "and the Spirit is ſerious, while he ſtrives with us; "and ſurely death, hell and heaven, and a future judg- "ment are ſerious things: and are not all things we "can think of ſo too? Shall then man be the only fool "and buffoon of the creation, to laugh and play away "his time; eſpecially when he comes to have, as it "were, one foot in the grave?" And he thinks another † great man ſpake a great deal of ſenſe, when he ſaid, That after all his ſtudies, travels, negotiations and experience of men and things, he found theſe things to remain upon his mind, as moſt ſolid truths, viz. That ſeriouſneſs is a man's beſt wiſdom, temperance his beſt phyſic, and a good conſcience his beſt eſtate; and that he found all things had forſaken him upon a death-bed, but God and prayer; for that he did look upon all his time paſt to be loſt, except that part of it which had been ſpent in praying or doing good.

He is therefore concerned to make a right uſe of retirement from the world, which he takes pleaſure in, except when the ſervice of God, or providential calls forbid him to indulge this humour. For he finds there is a great deal of truth in the old ſaying, QUI BENE LATUIT BENE VIXIT; He that attains to improve retirement beſt, lives beſt alſo. Let fooliſh men look on this as preciſeneſs or melancholy, he values it not. Nor does

* Sir Francis Walſingham. See Wanly's Hiſtory of Man.
† Sir John Maſon. Wanly's Hiſtory of Man.

does he envy the meddling and buſy man, who for worldly intereſt, though perhaps under the ſpecious pretence of ſerioufneſs and public uſefulneſs, muſt have a finger in every man's concerns. For he can ſay as Scipio of old, and with more reaſon than he, 'Nunquam minus ſolus ſum quam cum ſum ſolus,' I am never leſs alone than when alone. For though he be alone, he is not without company or buſineſs, that the ignorant world is not acquainted with.

For he lives above the creatures and all earthly enjoyments: and though he has to do with created things as well as others, yet he does not ſuffer his mind to terminate on theſe as his principal end, but paſſes through them unto God. And therefore he rejoiceth, in outward comforts, as if he rejoiced not; and ſorrows, in the time of trouble and calamity, as if he ſorrowed not; and uſes the world, ſo as neither to abuſe it or himſelf with it. For he remembers the time is ſhort, and that the faſhion of the world paſſeth away, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. And therefore his comforts lead him in to God as his benefactor, and the donor of all his mercies: His troubles drive him in to him that ſmites him; and his dangers make him flee to God for help and aſſiſtance.

He has a ſincere and cordial reſpect to all the laws, ordinances and inſtitutions of God, 1 John v. 3. So that he cannot allow himſelf to obey one and reject another: but is concerned to ſhew his obedience equally to all; though with a ſpecial regard to thoſe commandments, that do moſt directly condemn the luſts that naturally are moſt dear to him. And for the ſame end he chiefly de-

delights in thoſe ordinances that he finds lead him in moſt directly to communion with God.

High thoughts of God, and low thoughts of himſelf keep him in juſt poiſe, between deſpair and preſumption, 2 Cor. xii. 10. And the ſenſe of God's goodneſs and his own unworthineſs, doth both encourage and incite him to approach unto God, and keeps him humble under all his attainments.

Therefore love and reverence do equally concur in all his devotions. For he worſhips God as OPTIMUS ET MAXIMUS, the beſt and the greateſt Being, as his higheſt Sovereign, and as his chief good. And therefore he remembers, both his own dependent ſtate and his relation to God, whom he is allowed to come to as his Father in Chriſt: whom therefore he adores and ſerves, not according to the oldneſs of the letter, but in ſpirit and in truth.

And as he loves him that begetteth, ſo he loves all them alſo that are begotten thus ſpiritually unto God, 1 John v. 1, 2. And this he does impartially, to the beſt of his knowledge, without being confined to a party, or ſubdiviſion of Chriſtians. For he reckons religion to conſiſt, not ſo much in thoſe things, wherein he conſcientiouſly diſſents from others, and wherein he charitably believes others diſſent thus alſo from him; but in the great eſſentials and ſubſtantials, wherein all good men of all denominations are agreed. In which, if others reckon him of too large a charity, he thinks it is ſafeſt erring on this ſide, if indeed it be poſſible to err thus. And therefore with reſpect to ſuch perſons, he craves leave to join in his amen to the apoſtle, and

ſay

ſay with him, that though faith and hope be eſſential Chriſtian graces, yet charity, or rather (as * it ought to be tranſlated) love, is greater than all theſe, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. of which this is one property, that it thinks no evil, ver. 5.

But ſeeing a true Chriſtian knows that he has more and greater buſineſs to tranſact with God, than all the world beſides: therefore he is above all things concerned to have his approbation; that whether he be preſent in the body, or called to leave it, he may be accepted of him, 2 Cor. v. 9.

And therefore he lives conſtantly as under the awful and ſerious apprehenſions of a preſent Deity, Pſal. cxxxix. 7. &c. whoſe eyes he knows are ever upon him, taking notice of all he thinks, deſigns, ſays or does.

For which reaſon he is careful to have his accounts kept clear with God, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And therefore finds him-

* The Greek word ἀγάπη, as it is of a larger ſignification than charity is in our language, is very improperly tranſlated this way in 1 Cor. xiii. For charity now is only uſed, either to denote our candid and favourable conſtruction of the opinions or practices of others, or to expreſs our liberality to the poor. Whereas it is plain that this word is of a vaſtly larger ſignification in the original, as any perſon may ſee that conſiders the properties of it, as they are enumerated by the apoſtle in the above-cited chapter. And therefore we have no word but that of Love, as it relates both to God and man, to expreſs this by, which is the fulfilling therefore of the whole law here, but will not ſooner arrive at its higheſt pitch than upon our getting to heaven. Now charity, in the firſt ſenſe, is only one internal evidence to ourſelves of our love to our neighbours; and in the ſecond acceptation is but one external expreſſion of it to others in the time of their need.

himſelf indiſpenſibly obliged to examine and try himſelf daily; that he may rectify what is amiſs, beg pardon for miſtakes and faults, and diſtinctly know what he has received and ſtands in need of; and accordingly what he has to pray and praiſe for.

For he is not ſo fooliſh and conceited, as to think he has attained to ſuch a meaſure of religion, that he need go no further, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. But he labours all his days to grow in grace, knowledge and uſefulneſs, preſſing thus forward towards the mark, that the nearer he draws to the world of light, love and bliſs, he may be the fitter for it. So that he never reſts or ſits down, until he attain to the end of his faith at laſt, even the compleat ſalvation of his ſoul, 1 Pet. i. 9.

In a word, he is one who is careful to obſerve the whole will of God, Heb. x. 36. both with reſpect to the externals and vitals of Chriſtianity. For he acts from the moſt noble and vigorous principles of living faith and divine love, for the higheſt and beſt ends, the advancement of God's glory, and the increaſe of his kingdom in the world. And therefore as he brings down his religion from notions to practice, as one that has no ſeparate intereſt from that of his maſter: ſo he dares to own his being ſuch, whatever it coſt him, and will open his windows towards the God of Jeruſalem, though he ſhould fall under the greateſt ſeverity from men for doing ſo. For he is not only careful to found on the true and ſure foundation, but takes heed alſo to the materials he uſes towards carrying on the work of the ſuperſtructure, that theſe be not hay or ſtubble, or ſuch-like combuſtible ſtuff; but that they be gold and ſilver, and ſolid things that can bear the fire of the

greateſt probation, 1 Cor. iii. 11, 12. And therefore as he comes to the light, that he may know if his deeds be wrought in God, John iii. 21. So he behaves in all things as a mortal and accountable creature, that muſt die and be judged, and be happy or miſerable for an eternity; and therefore finds himſelf obliged to labour to pleaſe his God in all things, that whether he live or die he may be the Lord's, and find favour in his ſight, Rom. xiv. 8.

Lo! here is the man that is only intituled juſtly and truly to the character of a Chriſtian. And therefore let it be the great ſtudy of every ſoul here, to become ſuch: That we may through grace, walk worthy of ſuch a God, and ſuch a Saviour and Maſter, as we profeſs to ſerve and hope to enjoy: that ſo we may not receive his grace in vain, but may live as heirs of a future glory, and as candidates for the felicity of that ſtate.

For which purpuſe, ſet yourſelves to reverence and fear God more and more. For to man he hath ſaid, That the fear of God is his wiſdom, and to depart from evil his beſt underſtanding, Job xxviii. 28.

And that your fear and obedience may be acceptable to God, ſet yourſelves to the conſtant and diligent ſtudy of the holy Scriptures. For this is a conſiderable part of a godly and bleſſed man's character; that he meditates on God's law day and night, Pſal. i. 2. And hence it is that the Bereans are ſo much commended in Scripture; becauſe they ſearched the Scriptures themſelves, Acts xvii. 11. in order to know the things which the apoſtles preached, with the greater certainty.

And

And when ye hear the word of God explained and applied, conſider it as that which is given you in order to practice. Therefore deſpiſe not propheſying, though ye may perhaps obſerve ſome weakneſs in the ſpeaker, 1 Theſſ. v. 20. for ye are to receive it not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, 1 Theſſ. ii. 13. For the end of the miniſtry is, the perfecting of the ſaints, and the edifying of the body of Chriſt, Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Therefore be fervent and ſerious in prayer; which is the great mean to attain to communion with the Father and the Son. For this is the way by which, as I obſerved above, we attain to immediate converſe with God: ſo as to become as it were temples of the Holy Spirit.

And how happy ſhould I reckon myſelf, if this were the conſequent of my pains in meditating and diſcourſing on this great head of God's dwelling with men on the earth, to this auditory; that henceforth ye might be ſo ſtirred up with love and zeal for God and goodneſs, as to make religion your great and main buſineſs and concern, in order to become temples of the Holy Ghoſt. That thus all of us here might upon juſt grounds be able to ſay, with * a great and apoſtolical man of old. "Before we believed in God, our heart was a habita-

* I mean Barnabas, the companion of Paul, in the Epiſtle that goes under his name: which Clemens Alexandrinus, Lib. 2. Strom. pag. 373. B. pag. 375. B. pag. 389. D. pag. 396. D. pag. 410. C. & Lib. 5. pag. 571, 572. & pag. 577, & 578. and in his Pædag. Lib. 6. Cap. 10. pag. 646. C. cites or refers to as his genuine work. And ſo does Origen Lib. 1. contra Celſum, towards the end; Lib. 3. de Principiis Cap.

"tion full of corruption and exceeding weak, even as
"now the Heatheniſh temples are: for our hearts were
"then full of idols and their worſhip, and where devils
"had their abode; ſeeing we acted wholly contrary to
"God and his intereſts: But now are we become tem-
"ples of the true God. If ye aſk, how this change
"was effected? I will give you an account of it. Hav-
"ing received the pardon of our ſins through faith in
"the name of Chriſt our Lord, we do immediately be-
"come new perſons, being created thus over again. So
"that upon this God has entered into this our habita-
"tion, and has actually taken poſſeſſion of it, and ſo
"really dwells in us. If ye enquire how this can be?
"know, that ſeeing the word of faith is in us, who are
"the called according to his promiſe, and juſtified and
"made holy by him: Hence it comes to paſs, that he
"himſelf (who doth all theſe things in us and for us)
"doth indeed prophefy in us. For he doth indeed thus
"dwell in us; and though we are mortal creatures, yet
"he opens the gate of this temple, when he pleaſeth,
"which is the mouth which ſpeaks forth his praiſe. He
"gives

Cap. 2. & Homil. in Romanos ad Cap. 1. ver. 24. As doth Jerom alſo, in Catalog. Script. Eccleſ. Only Euſebius ſuſpects it, and ſpeaks dubiouſly of it. Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. 3. Cap. 25. & Lib. 6. Cap. 13, & 14. However I may well call the author an apoſtolical man, though it were not Barnabas; both upon the account of the primitive piety and ſimplicity that breathes in this epiſtle; and becauſe all Critics agree in this, that it is one of the moſt antient pieces of Chriſtian antiquity extant: which if it be not called from the author, may yet juſtly have been called the epiſtle of Barnabas, or of conſolation, from the nature and deſign of it. The words of this author, which I preſume to give the ſenſe of, are to be found in the middle of the 16 Section, pag. 40. of Cotelerius his edition by Le Clerc. They begin thus. Πρὸ τὸ ἡμᾶς πιστευσαι τῳ Θεῳ, &c.

"gives us repentance, and whatever we need. And in "a word, he turns us into temples for his own use and "service. Therefore he that would be saved, must not "so much consider the outward man, as him that dwells "in holy souls: for then he will come to see, that such "rapturous and holy words and actions, as others are "incapable of, must be from God that dwells within. "This therefore is the idea we are to have of the spiri-"tual temple, that is built up for God."

Let me therefore beg of you, that ye would pray and labour to be such. For which let me take leave of you, in the words of the * same affectionate and devout writer. "I beseech you brethren, to take my advice in "good part. For remember that the day draws nigh, "in which all the workers of iniquity must perish with "the evil one. For the Lord is near, and his reward "is with him. Therefore I do again and again beseech "you, that ye would carefully watch over yourselves, "and be faithful monitors to one another, that no hy-"pocrisy may creep in among you. And may God, "who governs the whole world, endue you with wis-"dom, knowledge, grace and patience: that ye may "all of you be so taught of God, and so understand his "will, that ye may be saved in the day of judgment. "And while ye meditate upon the things that I have set "before you, be mindful of me also, that if ye receive "any advantage by my labours, I may receive good "also by your prayers. I beg this favour from you; "that as long as ye lodge in your earthly habitations, "none of these duties may be neglected by you; but that

* Barnabas in Epist. Cathol. pag. 53. Sect. ult.

" that ye may without ceaſing enquire into and fill up
" every command of God, by holineſs and obedience.
" For which end chiefly I was induced to ſend you my
" thoughts this way, that ye might both be incited to,
" and encouraged in the ways of righteouſneſs. There-
" fore I take my leave of you now, as the children of
" divine love and peace. The God of glory and of
" grace be with your ſpirits." Amen.

THE GREATNESS AND DIFFICULTY OF THE MINISTERIAL WORK, AND THE DUTY AND INTEREST OF MINISTERS AND OTHERS, IN RELATION TO IT.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE GREATNESS AND DIFFICULTY

OF THE

MINISTERIAL WORK.

2 Cor. ii. 16. compared with Chap. iii. 5.

Who is ſufficient for theſe things? — We are not ſufficient of ourſelves. But our ſufficiency is of God.

AS there is no ſervice more honourable than that of the miniſtry; ſo there is none more arduous and laborious. And therefore the greateſt and moſt illuſtrious men God did ever employ this way, have been ready to ſink under the apprehenſion of its ſeemingly inſuperable difficulties.

The great man of God, Moſes, trembled at the thought of undertaking it, though he was under the immediate call of God. For when God ſpake to him out of the burning buſh, and ſaid, "Come now, and I will ſend thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayſt bring my people, the children of Iſrael, out of Egypt," Exod. iii. 10. Moſes attempts to decline this honourable meſſage, by ſaying, "Who am I, that I ſhould go unto Pharaoh, and that I ſhould bring forth the children of Iſrael out of Egypt?" ver. 11. And even after God had promiſed to be with him by his ſpecial preſence,

ver. 12. yet he ſtill excuſes himſelf from the difficulties that attended this embaſſy, not only from the power and pride of Pharaoh, but alſo from what he foreſaw of the incredulity and unperſuadableneſs of the Iſraelites. "But behold," ſays he, "they will not believe me, for they will ſay, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee," chap. iv. 1. Nay when God had anſwered this excuſe alſo, by three miraculous ſigns, to confirm his faith, and to convince both Pharaoh and the Iſraelites, ver. 2, 3, 4, &c. Yet he ſtill inſiſts upon his former ſtrain, in order to decline this errand. "O my Lord," ſays he, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor ſince thou haſt ſpoken to thy ſervant, but I am ſlow of ſpeech, and of a ſlow tongue," ver. 10. And after all this, when God had ſilenced him as to this objection alſo, by aſſuring him that he would be with his mouth, ver. 12. he continues notwithſtanding to excuſe himſelf, though beat out of all his arguments, by a kind of direct refuſal of giving obedience to the divine command, ver. 13. "O my Lord," ſays he, "I pray thee ſend by the hand of him thou ſhouldeſt ſend." As if he ſhould ſay, Lord ſend by ſome fitter perſon than I am: Or ſend by whom thou pleaſeſt, ſo I be not the man: Or (as I rather think probably to be his ſenſe), Lord, ſend by the hand of thy * Shilo, or thy Meſſiah; I am not he. Why

* I ſay probably the Meſſiah may be denoted here by שלה as well as by שילה in Gen. xlix. 10. For though there be ſome variation in the way of writing theſe words: yet the ſenſe of both is the ſame, if we may judge of this from the beſt critics, as well as from the ſcope of the words in both places. For whether we retain the Hebrew word, as our Engliſh interpreters do, in tranſlating Jacob's propheſy, in Gen. xlix. or whether we give the ſenſe of it, as here in Exodus: ſtill the meaning is the ſame, and the ſame perſon denoted. And therefore the Vulgar Latin and ſome other Verſions give the ſenſe of the word SHILO in Geneſis, as well as in Exodus, inſtead of retaining the word itſelf. See the Vulg. Lat. on Gen. xlix. 10. and John ix. 7. See alſo

Why then doſt not thou fulfil thy promiſe of his coming? Where is he all this while? But however we interpret this, we ſee God takes this laſt expreſſion ſo, as to be angry with Moſes for it, ver. 14. though he does ſo temper his diſpleaſure with mercy, as to give him Aaron, his brother, to be his aſſiſtant. Now, whence came it to paſs, that Moſes ſhould ſo induſtriouſly avoid this work, when he was ſo excellent a perſon above all others of his age, as to both bodily and mental endowments, and as to learning, both natural, acquired and divine; when not only the work was ſo glorious in itſelf, but his call to it ſo clear, and his encouragements in undertaking it ſo remarkable? Surely it was the ſenſe he had of his own inſufficiency, and the exceeding greatneſs of the undertaking. Otherwiſe no man ought more readily to have complied with it than he. For that this inſtance of Moſes is not impertinent with reſpect to us, to ſhew us the difficulty of our more ordinary miniſterial work, appears hence: That if his work was extraordinary above ours; ſo alſo were the pro-

alſo Mat. xi. 3. Heb. x. 37. (and Heb. iii. 1.) out of Habak. ii. 3. And let the reader conſult the Samaritan, Syriac, Arabic and Perſic, together with the Jeruſ. Targum, and that of B. Uzziel (though in this laſt Phineas be named foolithly), and then let him judge whether all theſe do not favour this ſenſe. Nay, perhaps, upon a more cloſe and impartial view of the Sept. and the Targum of Onkelos (who ſeem to have thought of this ſenſe leaſt), even they may ſeem to denote this. For if the Sent, or Perſon to be ſent, be the true meaning of SHILO, the addition of the qualification of Worthy (the Perſon worthy to be ſent), will not alter the meaning. But the conſideration of the context renders this ſenſe yet more probable, ſeeing here GOD allows Moſes to be SHILO in a typical ſenſe, and raiſes him thus above the character of a prophet, which is given to Aaron: See ver. 16. and chap. vii. 1. As if God ſhould ſay: "I will bear with thy weakneſs, even in this alſo. And "though the SHILO, that Jacob propheſies of, be not yet come; yet ſeeing "I deſign thee to be an eminent type of him, I allow thee alſo the name "and character of GOD, which he is to bear in a proper ſenſe. In this ſenſe "thou ſhalt be SHILO and a GOD, and Aaron ſhall be thy prophet."

promiſes made to him, and the encouragements and aſſiſtances given him, above what we can ever expect or pretend to.

But Moſes was not the only man that acted at this rate. For the prophet Jeremiah treads, as it were, in his very ſteps. Therefore when God calls him to his work, he excuſes his accepting of it, and ſays, "Lord, behold I cannot ſpeak, for I am a child," Jer. i. 6. He means not in age ſurely, but in knowledge, experience and abilities. And yet this ſame Jeremiah was not called, as Eliſha, from the plow, Amos, from the herdſmen, and many of the apoſtles, from the fiſhing trade. But he was called from among the prieſts of Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin; where, no doubt, he had the education of a ſcholar.

And if we deſcend here to the New Teſtament, we have the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, one of the greateſt men, if not the greateſt that ever lived on earth, adding his ſuffrage to the ſame judgment in the main, and crying out here, "Who is ſufficient for theſe things?" And if thou art not, O great apoſtle, may I juſtly ſay, Who is? If thou find thy ſhoulders ake under this burden; what ſhall ſuch poor creatures, as ſome of us are, be able to do towards the right diſcharge of it?

I ſhall not therefore trouble you here with any large account of the ſcope of the context, or how theſe words are brought in. Let it ſuffice at this time to tell you, that after the apoſtle had made an apology to the Corinthians for himſelf, chap. ii. 1—14. as to ſome things he had written about in his firſt epiſtle: He takes occaſion, in the next place, to add an apology for his whole

whole miniſtry, againſt thoſe that did calumniate him; which he inſiſts upon from chap. ii. 14. to chap. iii. 7. After which he inſenſibly ſlides into a compariſon of the law of Moſes and goſpel of Chriſt: wherein he magnifies and prefers the goſpel above the law in a great many reſpects.

And here, in the middle of his defence of his miniſtry, he twice acknowledgeth his own inability for this work, in the two verſes we have read. Which he mentioneth, without doubt, not only out of humility, but out of prudence alſo; in order to ſtop the mouths of thoſe, who might be apt to think that he had too high an eſteem of himſelf.

Now theſe two expreſſions make up the full ſenſe of the apoſtle in each of them. For whereas the firſt is more general, expreſſing the inability of all men, for the right managing of ſuch great things, in this exclamation, "Who is ſufficient for theſe things?" As if it were a queſtion, which none could anſwer. The ſecond expreſſion contains an anſwer unto it; and therein, the apoſtle's comment on his own text. Wherein three things deſerve our ſerious conſideration. The firſt is, a ſuppoſed conceſſion of what the firſt text contains and exhibits in the general; viz. That no man is ſufficient for theſe things; i. e. for the difficulties and duties of the miniſterial work.—The ſecond is, The reaſon aſſigned why all men are inſufficient for theſe things; and that is, becauſe there is no proportion between ſuch a ſublime and ſupernatural ſervice, as that of the goſpel-miniſtry is, and the impotency and weakneſs of men, ſince the fall. For ſo far is it from this, that we are not ſufficient

of

of ourſelves ſo much as to think a good thought. The third thing therefore, is the obviating of an objection, that might be ſuppoſed to ariſe from the former conſiderations. For, whereas ſome might ſay, If none be ſufficient for theſe things, why art thou and others ſo preſumptuous as to undertake this great work? To this he anſwers, by adding, That the ſufficiency of himſelf and other ſervants of Chriſt was of God. As if he ſhould ſay, however hard the work is, yet ſtill know that God is able to aſſiſt us herein. For though be inſufficient, he is all-ſufficient: for his ſtrength is made perfect in his people's weakneſs, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Theſe then are the three heads conſiderable in the text or texts we have read, which give us the full latitude of the apoſtle's ſcope and meaning. And therefore, according to theſe, we are led to a threefold enquiry here.

I. Wherein the greatneſs and difficulty of the miniſterial work lies.

II. How inſufficient miniſters are of themſelves for this work.

III. In what reſpects they are rendered fit (notwithſtanding theſe conſiderations) for their work through the divine aſſiſtance.

I. INQUIRY.

Wherein the greatneſs and difficulty of the miniſterial work lies.

To

To this I might juſtly anſwer, by another query, as the reverſe of this, and ſay, Wherein does the difficulty and greatneſs of the miniſterial work not appear? For is there any one thing within the compaſs of this ſervice, or any part of this ſacred miniſtration, which does not denote difficulty and the greateſt ſerioufneſs, if duly conſidered and performed as it ought to be?

Perhaps ſome may look on preaching as a very eaſy thing. But certainly it is their ignorance or inadvertency that makes them think ſo. For ſurely this is ſomething elſe than a fine harangue, or pretty gingle of words, made to pleaſe the fancy and tickle the itching ears of a common auditory. It is ſomething greater and more divine than a Ciceronian oration, though adorned and embelliſhed with flowers from the Ethicks of Seneca and other ſuch moraliſts. For though an eloquence that is unaffected be very requiſite and commendable, and the noble ſentences and notions of Heathens may very properly be brought in ſometimes into ſuch diſcourſes, as we find even * the apoſtle Paul did once and again: Yet we muſt not ſo run in this ſtrain, as to juſtle out the Scriptural ſtile, and neglect its deſign;

* Thus we find he cites Aratus the Cilician poet, applying to the true God, what he had ſaid of Jupiter; that men are his offſpring, Acts xvii. 28. And he had juſt reaſon thus to apply his words, ſeeing the wiſeſt Grecians ſpake of Jupiter, as a name that denoted the ſupreme God. He cites alſo Epimenides, whom he calls one of the Cretian prophets, becauſe he was looked upon by them and other Heathens to be inſpired; and whoſe character of the Cretians many of the Pagan writers confirm to be true, as well as the apoſtle, Tit. i. 12, 13. For which ſee the Critics on this place. And beſides theſe citations from Pagan authors, it has been obſerved that the proverbial expreſſion he makes uſe of, 1 Cor. xv. 33. that evil communications corrupt good manners, is taken out of Menander in Thaide; though the apoſtle mentions not this expreſly, as in the former paſſages he does the Cilician and Cretian authors.

ſign; as too many have done of late. For preaching is a moſt ſerious thing, and relates to the judgment and conſcience, in the greateſt and moſt important concerns of the ſouls of men. And is this then a trivial or common performance? What! is it an eaſy matter to ſearch into the deep things of God, and the myſterious and wonderful truths of the goſpel of Chriſt, when each of theſe is a TOBATHOS, an unfathomable depth; and when none of them can be rightly judged of, until its connexion with all the reſt be in ſome meaſure known? Is it an eaſy thing then, my dear friends, to attain to genuine ideas of the great truths of God? Or is it eaſy to bring them forth ſeaſonably to a mixt auditory? Or is it nothing to be able to clothe them in proper words and expreſſive terms, ſo as to let in the weakeſt minds into the knowledge of them? Or is it a ſmall matter to bring them home to men's conſciences, by a true and exact application? No, no; it will require the higheſt flights of a raiſed and ſanctified imagination, the quickeſt contrivance of a lively invention, the greateſt depth of a critical judgment, the ſtrongeſt and moſt ready memory, the warmeſt bowels of affection, and the cleareſt conveyance of an uniform goſpel-elocution, to do all theſe things as we ought. And therefore, in order to this, it will require much time and reading, ſerious and frequent meditation, fervent prayer, much heart-experience of religion, and great truſt in and dependence upon God. For otherwiſe we can never expect to attain to a true, ſpiritual, edifying and powerful gift of goſpel-preaching.

And as ſermonizing, ſo prayer, public prayer I mean, is no ſmall attainment. What! is it a light or trivial matter, to ſpeak to the moſt high God, as the mouth of

of ſome hundreds of ſouls; where perhaps there is as great a variety of caſes and circumſtances as there is of perſons? O! my friends, who can rightly reflect on all theſe things, without due reverence, fear and dread: leſt we offer the ſacrifice of fools in ſo ſolemn and immediate approaches to our infinitely glorious and exalted ſovereign; in our petitions and deſires, or in our praiſes and thankſgivings?

And is not the work of diſcipline and government, and eſpecially the adminiſtration of ſacraments, matter of the higheſt import? Conſider but one of theſe ordinances, viz. the Lord's ſupper. Is it eaſy, ſo to uſe the key of admiſſion, as neither to admit, knowingly, ſuch as may both ruin themſelves by it, and bring a ſcandal upon religion; nor exclude any who, though ignorant and guilty of many infirmities, may yet be ſincere in the main, and ſo have a juſt title to it before God? And who can be ignorant, with what reverence and godly concern, and with what love and joy a miniſter ought to diſpenſe this ordinance, ſo as may be moſt for the edifi.ation and comfort of thoſe that partake of it?

But theſe are not all the concerns that lie upon a miniſter. No: there are ſtill many more behind, of no ſmall concern and difficulty alſo. For is it not ſo, to enquire into the ſtate of his flock; to viſit the ſick, and to ſpeak to them and pray for them, as perſons upon the confines of eternal felicity or miſery; to inſtruct the ignorant; to reſolve the doubts and ſcruples of the afflicted in mind, or otherwiſe exerciſed ſouls; to carry aright to perſons under all manner of circumſtances; and to be able to convince gainſayers, and defend the

goſpel-truths by ſtrenuous reaſons. To do all theſe things, I ſay, ſo as we may approve ourſelves to God, to men and to our own conſciences, how high an attainment is it? And who of us are ſufficient for it?

But it were endleſs to run out upon all things that might be ſaid, as to the parts of the miniſter's work. Nay, if I ſhould but enlarge upon the hints I have now given, I might run out into a volume, rather than one diſcourſe. I ſhall therefore confine myſelf here to one conſideration only, in order to evince the greatneſs and difficulty of this work. And this is its multiplicity or multiformity: this office being complex, and having ſeveral offices wrapt up in it. And ſure I am, all perſons will agree in this; that it is a very difficult thing for one man rightly to diſcharge many offices, each of which is enough to take up any man of the greateſt abilities.

Now that the miniſterial office is a complex one, and made up of many, appears ſufficiently from the different names and appellations that miniſters get in Scripture. For ſometimes they are called Doctors and Teachers, from their preaching, and other inſtructions, Eph. iv. 11. Sometimes Paſtors, Overſeers or Biſhops, from their care of their flock, 1 Tim. iii. 1. and Tit. i. 7. Sometimes Elders or Preſbyters, from their ſeniority in knowledge and in place, and their gravity in the diſcharge of it, Acts xx. 17. Sometimes Servants, or Miniſters of God and Chriſt, from their divine and Chriſtian ſervice, work and miniſtration, Tit. i. 1. 1 Cor. i. 1. Sometimes the Angels of the Churches, from the immediate relation they ſtand in to God, in their being employed by him for the good of the churches

churches of Chriſt, Rev. iii. 1. Sometimes alſo Planters and Waterers of the trees of Chriſt's garden, as Paul and Apollos are called, 1 Cor. iii. 6. And ſometimes Joint-Workers with God, from the ſame reaſons I have already mentioned, 1 Cor. iii. 5. 9.

But I ſhall paſs by all theſe epithets and deſignations, leſt I cut out more work for myſelf than I can go thro' with at this time; and confine myſelf to four offices, that ſeem to be plainly included in the notion of a goſpel-miniſter. And theſe are the offices of an ambaſſador, of a ſteward, of a watchman or ſhepherd, and of a workman or labourer.

And 1ſt, Goſpel-miniſters are called ambaſſadors. A title I confeſs that belongs only to the apoſtles and other extraordinary church-officers, in the firſt and primary ſenſe of the word: ſeeing they were perſons immediately ſent forth by Chriſt, in order to treat with men in the buſineſs of ſalvation, in order to lay a foundation for the Church in all ages afterwards. But, though the apoſtles and other extraordinary office-bearers of the church, could only ſay, in a peculiar ſenſe, that they were ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God ſhould beſeech them in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 20. Yet it cannot be denied, but that we, who treat with men, in the name of God, about eternal ſalvation, are ambaſſadors alſo, though in a ſecondary reſpect; ſeeing we are now the only perſons (extraordinary officers being ceaſed) that act in the name of God, and in the ſtead of Chriſt, with relation to the concerns of the church, and for the advantage of immortal ſouls.

Now the office of an ambaſſador, or (if that be not allowed) of an envoy, or (if that alſo be rejected) of an ordinary meſſenger, is no leſs difficult than honourable. For they are perſons of the greateſt endowments and parts that are uſually choſen to fill ſuch poſts, and go upon ſuch errands. And if ſo; how great a work muſt it be to act the part of an ambaſſador, envoy, or meſſenger, from the great God to poor ſinful men? How difficult is it for us to keep in all things to our inſtructions, and to bring honour to our maſter, and felicity to ourſelves, by a vigorous, prudent and ſucceſsful diſcharge of our meſſage, and by a life and converſation worthy of this character, and ſuitable to the authority, and agreeable to the commiſſion by which we act?

2dly, Miniſters are not only ambaſſadors, but ſtewards alſo; and that in a twofold reſpect. For,

1. They are ſtewards or truſtees of the truths of God; as the apoſtle ſpeaks, when he ſays, "Let a man ſo account of us, as of the miniſters of Chriſt, and ſtewards of the myſteries of the goſpel," 1Cor. iv. 1. For though the apoſtles were ſo in a more ſpecial ſenſe than we are: Yet as we ſucceed them in their more ordinary work, we are intruſted alſo with a ſtewardſhip this way. Now this truſt of the truths of the goſpel ſtands in two things.

(1.) In opening and explaining them for the ſpiritual edification of Chriſtians: in which ſenſe ſurely the miniſter's lips now, as well as the prieſt's of old, ſhould preſerve knowledge, Mal. ii. 7.

(2.) In

(2.) In defending and maintaining them againſt adverſaries and oppoſers. For a ſteward muſt not ſuffer vermin to eat up the proviſion of God's houſe: Nor muſt a guardian or truſtee permit cheats or pretenders to ruin or demnify his minor or pupil's eſtate and goods. Therefore Paul requires this in an overſeer or paſtor: that he be able by ſound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainſayer, Tit. i. 9.

In the 2d place, miniſters are ſtewards of the ordinances of God's church alſo; which they are obliged to diſpenſe in all faithfulneſs to their congregations. For thus ſays the apoſtle Peter, "As every man hath received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God," 1 Pet. iv. 10.

3dly, Miniſters are alſo called watchmen and ſhepherds: both which characters and offices I take here under one notion. For the watchman in a city or camp, is the ſame to the citizens or ſoldiers that a ſhepherd is to his ſheep in the field or wilderneſs. And what the ſhepherd is to his flock againſt the approach of ravenous beaſts, that is the watchman againſt an enemy. Now when the church of God in Scripture is ſpoken of under the metaphor of a city or camp; then are miniſters conſidered as watchmen ſet to defend it, as Ezekiel was of old, Ezek. iii. 17. Upon which account the apoſtle exhorts you, to obey them that have the rule over you; becauſe they watch for your ſouls, as they that muſt give an account, Heb. xiii. 17. Though, at the ſame time, their being ſaid to watch for men's ſouls, has an alluſion alſo to ſhepherds watching their flocks, who muſt be accountable to the maſter and owner,

owner, in caſe any of the ſheep be loſt through careleſneſs or unfaithfulneſs. In which reſpect it is, that miniſters are conſidered as inferior or under-ſhepherds; Chriſt himſelf being the chief ſhepherd, biſhop or overſeer of ſouls, 1 Pet. ii. 25. And indeed he is the only Arch-biſhop or Biſhop of biſhops, overſeers or paſtors, that the ſacred oracles are acquainted with, whatever ſplutter and noiſe ſome men make to the contrary.

4thly, Miniſters of the goſpel are alſo known in Scripture by the name of Labourers or Workmen, Mat. xx. 1. For they labour in God's vineyard and Chriſt's harveſt, Luke x. 2. And in the faithful diſcharge of this ſervice, are looked upon to be workmen worthy of their hire, Mat. x. 10. Therefore we are called to approve ourſelves to be workmen, rightly dividing the word of God, that ſo we need not be aſhamed, 2 Tim. ii. 15. Now ſeeing a great part of the miniſter's work lies in his dividing the word of God aright, we are to enquire how we are to diſcharge this great duty. And as to this, I ſhall give you no other comment than the apoſtle's own, 2 Tim. iii. 16. where he divides the word into four parts. The 1. is the word of doctrine, which conſiſts in the explication of the truths of God, in order to inlighten the mind, and inſtruct the ſoul in the true and ſound principles and doctrines of religion. 2. The word of reproof, i. e. ſerious and faithful warning as to ſin and its effects, and charging home the guilt of it on the conſciences of offenders, with threatnings in caſe they do not repent and amend. 3. The word of correction, i. e. the exerciſe of church-diſcipline in caſe of hereſy or ſcandals, by excluding them from the ſociety as to the participation of the ſpiritual communion of the ſame. And,

4. The

4. The word of inſtruction, i. e. either as to matters of indiſpenſible practice, or ſuch things as circumſtances make ſo. To which head we may alſo refer the reſolution of doubts and caſes of conſcience, as theſe may occur.

Now from all theſe conſiderations thus laid together, I ſuppoſe it will eaſily appear, how great and difficult a work this of the miniſtry is. And therefore let this ſuffice for an anſwer to our firſt inquiry.

II. INQUIRY.

How inſufficient miniſters are of themſelves for this great Work.

I have, in a great meaſure, prevented myſelf already, as to this, by what I have ſaid upon the former head. For if all and every part of the miniſterial office be ſo difficult, and if this be a complex one, made up of many, then it will plainly appear to be very hard for ſuch poor creatures as we are; and conſequently we cannot but look upon ourſelves as inſufficient to diſcharge aright ſo ſacred an embaſſy from God to men, and ſo great a ſtewardſhip of the goſpel-truths and ordinances, accompanied with ſuch watching over the church and the ſouls of men, and with ſuch labours and pains, in the harveſt and vineyard of our Lord. Alas! who is ſufficient for all theſe things?

But there are other conſiderations ſtill, which demonſtrate men's inſufficiency this way further, viz. the conſideration of the author of this work, of the qualifications required in the perſons diſcharging it, the hinder-

ances that are in the way of performing it, and the end and design thereof.

And, first, How insufficient men are of themselves for this great work, appears from its author, God himself, who is the instituter of it in a more special manner than of other offices. Whatever controversies have been about church-government and church-officers, as to their number and parity or imparity: Yet all agree that preaching ministers, in the general notion of them, i. e. such as take the oversight of Congregations upon them, are Jure Divino. A bishop or overseer, in this sense, is as plainly appointed in Scripture, as any thing can be. And none but Atheists and Anti-Scripturists ever denied it.

Now can it be easy to serve the great King of heaven in so sacred an office, and in so immediate a way? Let what I have already said be impartially considered, and then it will easily appear that it is one of the most weighty and momentous employments that ever were, to serve the great God in such great concerns, as those of religion and the souls of men are.

2dly, How insufficient men are of themselves for this work, appears from the qualifications that such persons ought to be possessed of, in order to be capacitated rightly to discharge it. For besides gifts natural and acquired, spiritual and supernatural ones are also necessary. Now all the qualifications necessary to make a minister compleat, and fit him for his work (that he may abound, and be successful in it), may be reduced to three, viz. Knowledge, elocution, and prudence.

1. A miniſter muſt be eminent for knowledge. He muſt be enriched by Chriſt, as the apoſtle ſpeaks *, in all (the knowledge of) his word, and in all knowledge relating to the right underſtanding of it, 1 Cor. i. 5: Now if this be required in all Chriſtians, in ſome meaſure, then ſurely much more ought miniſters to be enriched this way, who are to teach and inſtruct others. An ignorant miniſter is a ſhame and ſcandal to this ſacred office. And therefore every one muſt ſtudy the Scriptures carefully, and whatever elſe is requiſite to lead him into the genuine and full underſtanding of the things that are there revealed. For which end he muſt earneſtly beg the divine Spirit, to be led into all truth. And in order to know the truths of God, he muſt not only preach them but live them. For he that doth the will of our heavenly Father, as our Lord aſſures us, ſhall know the doctrine, whether it be indeed of God or not, John vii. 17.

2. A miniſter muſt not only have the gift of knowledge, but that of elocution alſo. He muſt ſpeak as the oracles of God; and with boldneſs, as the ambaſſador of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11. Eph. vi. 20. For he muſt be

* I humbly ſuppoſe this is the Apoſtle's ſenſe. For it agrees beſt with the ſeries of the context, as alſo with the uſual acceptation of λογος in Scripture, as ſignifying the word or doctrine of Chriſt. And therefore I ſee no reaſon for rendering it Utterance here. For though γνωσις follow, yet it is ſo uſual to join ſynonimous words together, that this does not at all militate againſt me. Nay if we look down to chap. xii. 8. we will find that both theſe are put for one. So that λογος & γνωσις here, are no more than λογος γνωσεως, 'the Word of Knowledge,' there. However, ſeeing γνωσις added to λογος, may be ſuppoſed, as to denote the ſame thing; ſo to ſuperadd ſome further conſideration of it, I have accordingly taken notice of this, as I have rendered it here. Now in this ſenſe alſo I underſtand the ſame words, 2 Cor. viii. 7. though there alſo we find λογος rendered Utterance in our verſion.

be capacitated to make known to others what he knows himſelf. He muſt therefore have an edifying gift, both of prayer and preaching; and know alſo how to ſpeak to edification in private conferences: for the apoſtle determines, that the greateſt of all gifts is that of propheſying, 1 Cor. xiv. 1. And that therefore he had rather ſpeak five words, ſo as to teach and edify others, than ten thouſand in an unknown language, ver. 19. But it is not enough to have the utterance of words, unleſs he hath that of deeds alſo. He muſt therefore ſpeak in his life and actions, as well as by his diſcourſes. And that his converſation may be ſpeaking, he muſt ſtudy holineſs and purity, gravity and ſolidity, ſweetneſs and ſociableneſs; that he may this way, if poſſible, recommend religion; that his light ſhining thus before men, they may alſo be brought to glorify God, Mat. v. 16. But if we would ſee more of the qualifications of a miniſter, in relation to this particular, let us read what the apoſtle ſays, in his epiſtles to Timothy and Titus. See 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i.

3. A miniſter muſt not only ſtudy to excel in knowledge and in utterance, but in prudence alſo. For this is no leſs uſeful to him in private, than the other qualifications are in public; that I ſay not alſo, that this is equally uſeful to direct in public matters, as in private ones. But this is ſo known to all that are not unacquainted with the world, that I need not inſiſt further upon it. Though if any can poſſibly doubt of it, they may be ſatisfied from the next head. Therefore,

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3dly, The inſufficiency of miniſters for this great work appears from the many lets and hinderances that they have to ſtruggle with in the diſcharge thereof. They

They have their own ignorance and weakneſs to bear up againſt; yea their luſts and corruptions too. And beſides theſe, and Satan himſelf together with his temptations, they have enemies without, ſuch as Atheiſts, Achriſtiſts (as I may juſtly call them rather than Deiſts), ſcoffers, ſceptics, Sadducees, heretics, ſeducers, calumniators and perſecutors. And they have enemies within alſo, even among the people they are concerned with. For ſometimes they have to deal with thoſe that are factious and turbulent, as well as with thoſe that are quiet and peaceable: Sometimes with the preſumptuous and conceited, as well as with the humble and modeſt: Sometimes with the ſcandalous and debauched, as well as with holy and circumſpect perſons: And ſometimes with melancholy and deſpairing ſouls, as well as with the chearful ones, and ſuch as live in the joyful hope of eternal ſalvation. And beſides all this, how difficult is it to carry aright with perſons of high and low degree, and with the learned and ignorant; and to know, when it is fit to be a Boanerges, and when a ſon of conſolation? Is it eaſy to overcome the carnal reaſons of ſome men, the fears and doubts of others, the oppoſition of enemies, and the ſtupidity and ſenſuality of many hearers? And are not the luſts, the prejudices, and the humours and paſſions of men difficult to overcome? Eſpecially if we conſider that (beſides all theſe things, and the emulations of ſome, and jealouſies of others, which we muſt encounter with) faithful miniſters have a double meaſure of afflictions to expect, above other Chriſtians. For, though there were ſome things peculiar to the apoſtle Paul, above what we can ſuppoſe will be literally fulfilled in us: Yet ſeeing he tells us, that Chriſt intended to make him an example of all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter

believe on him to life everlaſting, 1 Tim. i. 16. We have reaſon, at leaſt, to conſider ſeriouſly what he met with, in the faithful diſcharge of his miniſtry: "I have been," ſays he, "in labours more abundant than moſt men; in ſtripes above meaſure; in priſons more frequent; in deaths oft; of the Jews five times received I forty ſtripes ſave one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I ſtoned, thrice I ſuffered ſhipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeying oft, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderneſs, in perils in the ſea, in perils among falſe brethren; in wearineſs and painfulneſs, in watchings often, in hunger and thirſt, in faſtings often, in cold and nakedneſs; beſides thoſe things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches," 2 Cor. xi. 23, &c. For, whatever particularities might be in the apoſtle Paul's caſe above others; yet we are to remember, that this was the lot of the apoſtles in general, to be expoſed to all manner of afflictions. "For," ſays the ſame inſpired writer, "I think that God hath ſet forth us the apoſtles laſt, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a ſpectacle unto the world, and to angels and men: we are reckoned fools for Chriſt's ſake, and weak, and deſpiſed: even unto this preſent hour we both hunger and thirſt, and are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour with our own hands. Being reviled we bleſs, being perſecuted we ſuffer it, being defamed we intreat. We are made as the off-ſcouring of all things unto this day," 1 Cor. iv. 5, 10, &c. "In all which reſpects (as the apoſtle ſays elſewhere), we approve ourſelves to be the miniſters of God, in much patience,

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in afflictions, in neceſſities, in diſtreſſes, in ſtripes, in impriſonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in faſtings," 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5, &c. Therefore the apoſtle James exhorts us, to take his brethren, the prophets, as an example of ſuffering affliction and patience, James v. 10. And as it was with the apoſtles, ſo it was alſo with the ſaints and moſt eminent miniſters in all ages ſince, for the moſt part; for which I refer you to the hiſtories of the church both ancient and modern.

4thly, The inſufficiency of miniſters appears alſo from the conſideration of the end and deſign of their miniſtry, for the promoting and carrying on of which they are ſent: wnich is a complex one, and made up of theſe three, viz. God's glory, the civilizing of the world, and the ſalvation of men. Now how difficult a matter is it, to accompliſh all theſe, yea or any of them? How hard a matter is it, to make the glory of God ſhine forth in a dark world, or indeed in any part of it? And is it an eaſy matter, to civilize nations, and remove the ſavageneſs and barbarity that many men are under? And how hard a work is it to convert ſouls, to ſoften the flinty heart, and renew men's ſpirits? And yet theſe are the ends of the miniſtry, however difficult (or impoſſible rather, without God's ſpecial aſſiſtance) they may ſeem to be? For, as the apoſtle ſays, the miniſterial office (including both the firſt extraordinary and the ſubſequent ordinary office-bearers) is deſigned for the perfecting of the ſaints, and for the edifying of the body of Chriſt; till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto

a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Eph. iv. 12, 13.

Now from all these considerations, as additional to those I mentioned under the former inquiry, it may sufficiently appear, how hard and difficult the work of a minister is. And therefore we may conclude this part of our discourse with the paraphrase of an * antient writer on the apostle's words, that he that desireth the office of a bishop or overseer, desireth a good work, 1 Tim. iii. 1. Yes, says he, a good work it is, but it is an hard work too. For it is a work not a dignity, a work not a pleasure, a work which will teach us to sink in humility, and not to swell with pride. A saying worthy of the serious thoughts of all men, but especially of the ministers of Christ.

III. INQUIRY.

In what respects ministers, notwithstanding their own insufficiency, are rendered fit and qualified for this work through the sufficiency that God endues them with. Or wherein doth our sufficiency this way, which is of God, stand.

To this I answer, that as in other cases, so in this, we may truly say, If God be for us, we need not be concerned what or who is against us, Rom. viii. 31. He who is self-sufficient, is surely all-sufficient for his servants, who trust in him and depend upon him. Therefore he can easily enable us to surmount and overcome all

* I mean Jerom, whose words are these, " Si quis Episcopatum desiderat, " bonum opus desiderat, opus non dignitatem, laborem non delicias, opus " per quod humilitate decrescat, non intumescat fastidio."

all the difficulties we can be ſuppoſed to meet with, in the exerciſe of the ſacred office to which he has called us. And ſurely we have reaſon to expect his aſſiſtance, from our Lord's promiſe, which though it does more immediately relate to the apoſtles, yet does certainly include all thoſe that were to be called to ſucceed them in their ordinary work, as the extent of the expreſſion does plainly intimate, when he ſays; "And lo I am with you even to the end of the world," Matth. xxviii. 20.

And therefore this one promiſe contains a full anſwer to all the things wherein the inſufficiency of miniſters doth ſtand: as we may eaſily ſee, by running over the things I have mentioned under the preceding propoſitions.

For 1ſt it is eaſy from hence to find an anſwer to all thoſe things I hinted under the firſt propoſition. For, though the work of the miniſtry be indeed very difficult, and enough to fright ſerious perſons, and ſink them under the weight of ſuch a complex office: Yet this is fully anſwered by this one conſideration, that the work is not ſo much ours as God's; and that therefore he is more concerned to carry it on than we can poſſibly be. Is the work God's? let us then be aſſured, that he will not ſtand by as an unconcerned ſpectator, and ſee us tug at it alone, without giving us his helping hand, and aſſiſting us in our ſincere and honeſt attempts to perform the ſame.

And 2dly we may hence alſo ſee an anſwer to all we ſuggeſted under the ſecond propoſition. For 1. If the author of this office be matter of terror in one reſpect,

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ſo alſo ground of encouragement in another. For we certainly conclude from hence, that ſo good and kind a maſter will not ſend his ſervants on a warfare upon their own charges, 1 Cor. ix. 7. 2. And though the qualifications, that muſt concur to make a man an able miniſter, be many and great; yet he can eaſily make us ſo. If he call us to this work, he will fit us for it. It was by him that fiſhermen were made apoſtles. And it is by him that we muſt come to be made able miniſters of the New Teſtament, not of the letter but of the ſpirit: 2 Cor. iii. 6. for it is he only that enricheth his ſervants in all thoſe gifts and graces they ſtand in need of.

3. It is true indeed, the lets and hinderances in the way of a miniſter, as to the faithful diſcharge of his work, are many: But how eaſily can God carry us through and above all theſe? If he be with us, there are more for us than againſt us. He can ſend a Moſes only with a rod, to force a proud Pharaoh and his whole kingdom to own a God: And, in caſe of his attempt to cut off the people of God by armies, he can bring the waves of the ſea to deſtroy him and them. He can blow down the ſtrong walls of Jericho with the ſound of rams' horns (Joſh. vi.); and make Gideon's three hundred water-lappers to defeat the vaſt Midianitiſh armies, with the ſound of trumpets and breaking of pitchers, Judg. vii. 7, 19, &c. If God ſend forth a Jeremy, or any elſe, upon any ſpecial ſervice, he can make him as a defenced city, an iron pillar and brazen wall, againſt whom all the princes, prieſts and people may fight, and not be able to prevail, Jer. i. 18, 19. And if he raiſe up a Paul, an Athanaſius, or a Luther, he can make him carry on a reformation, in ſpite of all oppoſition. Therefore let us comfort ourſelves with

this,

this, that our God is able to make us ſtand (Rom. xiv. 4.) though we be never ſo weak of ourſelves for our great work; nay with this alſo, that he will not deſert us in our work, if he do indeed call us to it. And, 4. Though the end of the miniſterial work, being the glory of God and the good of men, be indeed too great for us to reach, if left to ourſelves: yet the ſame argument holds here alſo. For it is the ſame thing with God, to work with many or with few, with ſtrong or weak inſtruments, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. He did therefore think Gideon's army too many to ſave Iſrael by, till he had reduced them to a handful, Judg. vii. 2. 4. For he takes pleaſure often to work by the weakeſt veſſels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, 2 Cor. iv. 7. Out of the mouth of babes and ſucklings he brings forth ſtrength, Pſal. viii. 2. Nay he frequently brings down the high and mighty by things that are ſmall and deſpiſed, 1 Cor. i. 27, &c. For his grace is ſufficient for us, and his ſtrength is made manifeſt in our weakneſs; that no fleſh may glory in his preſence, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 1 Cor. i. 29.

And thus we ſee, how God can make weak and poor creatures ſufficient for this great and difficult work, and ſucceſsful in carrying it on notwithſtanding all difficulties. So that I hope by this time, we underſtand how the apoſtle is to be underſtood, in his anſwering in the latter of our texts, what he ſuggeſted to himſelf as an objection, in the firſt of them. So that I have no more to trouble you with, as to the explication of the words I read unto you.

APPLICATION.

But I hope ye will bear with me, in making ſome improvement of what I have ſaid. For which end let me tell you that this doctrine has a voice to three ſorts of perſons; which will take in all of us here. For it ſpeaks, 1. To us who are miniſters. 2. To other church-officers who are to aſſiſt us for the good of the congregation. And, 3. To all Chriſtians whatſoever, eſpecially ſuch as are actual members of the church.

And, firſt, the things I have already conſidered as to the miniſterial office and work, teach us our duty, who are miniſters of the goſpel. And there are four uſes we are to make of this doctrine.

The firſt uſe is, that we learn hence, to live within ſight of ourſelves, of our weakneſs and inſufficiency this way. Surely the ſenſe of the greatneſs of our work and our own unfitneſs for it, is enough to keep us humble all our days; and may juſtly oblige us to walk ſoftly and humbly with our God, Iſa. xxxviii. 15. yea and perhaps frequently to be in heavineſs of ſoul, conſidering our many frailties and ſhortcomings this way. How awful and awakening a conſideration is it, to think, that we endanger our own ſouls by being in any thing unfaithful to the ſouls of others, that are ſomeway under our charge? The ſenſe of which has ever been matter of the moſt ſerious and deep concern to the beſt of miniſters in all times: tho' none whoſe works I have read, ſeem to have been more under the conſtant im-

preſſions

preſſions of it than * Chryſoſtom of old; who ſeems to queſtion the ſalvation of a great many miniſters on this head. O therefore, what reaſon have we to walk ſeriouſly, circumſpectly and humbly before God, in the diſcharge of this weighty and momentous ſervice and work!

The 2d uſe is, that we learn henceforth to truſt in and depend upon our gracious God more and more, that through his all-ſufficiency we may be capacitated to perform this work aright, and that the hardeſt and moſt difficult parts of it may be thus made eaſy and ſweet to us. If God give wiſdom liberally to all them that aſk, James i. 5. How much more to us that need ſo much thereof, conſidering how many things we have to do, and how perplexing our circumſtances frequently are? Therefore it is the duty of all, but more eſpecially of miniſters, to live cloſely and conſtantly with God, that their need may be abundantly ſupplied in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, Phil. iv. 19. and that we may be able to ſay, with

* This excellent perſon, in his Homil. on Heb. xiii. 17. ſays, among other things, That the dread of that threatning did continually ſhake his ſoul, viz. That in Mat. xviii, 6. "That it were better that a mill-ſtone were tied about our neck, and we thrown with it into the depth of the ſea, than that we ſhould offend one of Chriſt's little ones." ὁ γαρ φόβος, &c "The dread (ſays he) "of this does continually make me tremble. For if he that offends but one, "ſhall ſuffer ſo ſeverely, what miſeries muſt they be ſuppoſed to endure under "whom multitudes miſcarry?" He adds, "That neither ignorance, nor "want of experience, nor neceſſity, nor force, can excuſe a man in this caſe. "And that he believes, any one of the flock may ſooner be excuſed for his "own ſins, than Biſhops or Overſeers for the ſins of others, which they are "acceſſary unto. And that therefore the puniſhment of ſuch is unavoidable, "if any perſon of his church periſh through his fault." He that would ſee more to this purpoſe, let him, among other parts of his Works, conſult Homil. 34. in Heb. pag. 602. in Act. Homil. 3. & 24. in 1 Tim. Homil. 10. in Tit. Homil. 1. & de Sacerdot. Orat. 6.

with the apoſtle, "I can do all things through Chriſt, that ſtrengthens me," Phil. iv. 13.

The 3d uſe is, that in order to the better diſcharging and performing the duties of this great office, we that are miniſters do ſet before us thoſe things which God does in a moſt ſpecial and peculiar manner require of us.

And in order to this, I ſhall adventure to propoſe the character of a true goſpel-miniſter; which, though it may juſtly make me aſhamed when I view myſelf in this glaſs, may yet be of uſe to incite both me and others to labour what we can, to come as near this pattern as it is poſſible for us to do through the gracious aſſiſtance of our glorious God and Saviour. If then ye would know what a miniſter of the goſpel of Chriſt ſhould be (for I am afraid there are but very few, that actually attain to live up to the rule this way, as they ought) I ſhall ſum up my thoughts and idea of him here in as few but comprehenſive words as poſſibly I can.

A true goſpel-miniſter is one, who is, through grace, and by education and diligence, qualified, in ſome meaſure, for his great work, and is therefore ſtudious to be and act as a man, ſcholar, and Chriſtian; that he may become an able miniſter of the New Teſtament. He is a man as to a ſufficient meaſure of gifts natural, a ſcholar as to gifts acquired by ſtudy and pains, and a Chriſtian as to grace, experience and piety.

Yet he takes not upon him the miniſterial office of himſelf, but looks up to God both for his inward and outward providential call; and in order to full ſatisfaction

tion this way, ſubmits himſelf to thoſe whoſe work it is to try, examine, ordain, and ſend forth others to ſerve Chriſt in the goſpel. For he knows that none ought to take upon him this ſacred office, but he that is called to it as Aaron was, Heb. v. 4, 5. ſince even Chriſt honoured not himſelf, ſo as to run without being ſent, but was faithful to him that appointed him, Heb. iii. 2.

He undertakes not this holy work for worldly or ſecular ends, but in order to promote the great purpoſes of the goſpel of Chriſt, that God may be honoured in the converſion, ſanctification, and ſalvation of precious and immortal ſouls.

Therefore he makes not a popular applauſe, his ſcope and deſign, as remembering that his Saviour has told him, That it is he only that ſpeaketh of himſelf, and that is beneath or of this earth (i. e. one who is acted merely from worldly principles) that ſeeketh his own honour, John vii. 18. and iii. 31. And therefore he is careful to imitate the apoſtle, who ſpeaks the inward ſenſe of all faithful miniſters, as well as his own, when he ſays, "We preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt the Lord, and ourſelves your ſervants for his ſake," 2 Cor. iv. 5.

And hence likewiſe it is, that he dare not make filthy lucre his end, nor have men or women's perſons in admiration becauſe of advantage: nor doth he affect to lord it over Chriſt's heritage, nor yet to have pre-eminence above the reſt of his brethren, who are ſet in the ſame equality of office and power with himſelf.

He

He is one who labours in the word and doctrine, rightly dividing the truth of God, according as the ſtate of his flock requires his accommodating and applying the ſame. In all which he conſiders the worth of ſouls, and the danger they are in of being loſt, and the account he is to give to his great Lord and maſter, how he hath behaved himſelf in his ſtewardſhip, and the ſervice of his Lord.

He * feareth not the face of any man in the diſcharge of his office, and will not, out of fear or ſervile compliance, balk any truth or duty, or ceaſe to reprove ſin, as reckoning that he ought to obey God rather than men.

He is very ſenſible of his own weakneſſes in the performance of his work: and therefore as he doth earneſtly beg for the divine aſſiſtance, and humbly wait for it, in order to the right diſcharge of the ſeveral parts of his truſt; ſo, in his being enabled to do any thing for God

* An eminent inſtance of this was the great Mr John Welſh, when he lived in France, after his being baniſhed from his own country by King James, for the like undaunted miniſterial behaviour at home. Which take in the words of the learned Bodius in Prelect. in Eph. pag. 1101. C. where having diſcourſed of this qualification of a miniſter, he adds. "Qua de re mihi ſane nunquam "excidet, Viri gravis & Paſtoris eximii (Johannis Welſchii) reſponſio; quem "quum in loco, in lingua, in gente perigrina, ſancta quadam uſum vidiſſem li- "bertate, in Dei verbo annunciando, meamque tante fiducie admirationem illi "ingenue profeſſus fuiſſem; ſic ille ex intimo animi ſenſu, vultu velut ad con- "dolentiam, non ad contemptum vel dedignationem, compoſito. Vah! Egone "hominum quorumvis faciem aut curem aut metuam; qui memini & reputo "apud me, me coram S. Sancta & Glorioſa illa Majeſtate conſiſtere, cujus ver- "bum, in ipſius conſpectu, ſervis & creaturis ejus annuncio! Crede mihi, quum "ea me ſubit cogitatio, vultus hominum quorumcumque curare aut magni fa- "cere non poſſum, etiamſi vellem quam maxime. Sic ille Vir Dei; qua reſ- "ponſione, ſicut mihi plane ſatisfecit, ita mihi tante virtutis admirationem auxit "non abſtulit.

God and mens ſalvation this way, he aſcribes the whole glory to God and Chriſt.

He reckons that his buſineſs is to make men more knowing and more holy; and therefore is careful to bring them over to the true knowledge of God and Chriſt, and to the principles and practice of our holy religion, rather than to a party or diſputable opinion, to uphold and promote a private intereſt. He is therefore more concerned about the eſſentials, than the circumſtantials of truth, as being loth to have Chriſtians taken up ſo much about little matters, while the one thing neceſſary lies neglected.

Therefore he makes no more things neceſſary to ſalvation, than Chriſt has made, nor teacheth for doctrines of God the commandments of men. And as hence he charitably judgeth of, and bears with thoſe that differ from him in leſſer matters: ſo he leans not ſo much to his own underſtanding, as to be over-dogmatical and poſitive, in things not ſo plainly revealed, as to neceſſitate the aſſent of men this or the other way. But if he do diſſent from the generality of his brethren in any thing, he does it not out of faction or conceitedneſs, but from a real diſſatisfaction in point of reaſon or conſcience. About which notwithſtanding he raiſes no clamour, to the hazarding of the public peace, nor judgeth of himſelf more highly than he ought; but is careful to obſerve the apoſtle's advice, To walk with others ſo far as he has attained by the ſame common rule, and to mind the ſame things, that ſo what they and he differ in may be diſcovered to both in God's good time and way, Phil. iii. 16.

Being

He is one who labours in the word and doctrine, rightly dividing the truth of God, according as the ſtate of his flock requires his accommodating and applying the ſame. In all which he conſiders the worth of ſouls, and the danger they are in of being loſt, and the account he is to give to his great Lord and maſter, how he hath behaved himſelf in his ſtewardſhip, and the ſervice of his Lord.

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* An eminent inſtance of this was the great Mr John Welſh, when he lived in France, after his being baniſhed from his own country by King James, for the like undaunted miniſterial behaviour at home. Which take in the words of the learned Bodius in Prelect. in Eph. pag. 1101. C. where having diſcourſed of this qualification of a miniſter, he adds. "Qua de re mihi ſane nunquam "excidet, Viri gravis & Paſtoris eximii (Johannis Welſchii) reſponſio; quem "quum in loco, in lingua, in gente perigrina, ſancta quadam uſum vidiſſem li- "bertate, in Dei verbo annunciando, meamque tante fiducie admirationem illi "ingenue profeſſus fuiſſem; ſic ille ex intimo animi ſenſu, vultu velut ad con- "dolentiam, non ad contemptum vel dedignationem, compoſito. Vah! Egone "hominum quorumvis faciem aut curem aut metuam; qui memini & reputo "apud me, me coram S. Sancta & Glorioſa illa Majeſtate conſiſtere, cujus ver- "bum, in ipſius conſpectu, ſervis & creaturis ejus annuncio! Crede mihi, quum "ea me ſubit cogitatio, vultus hominum quorumcumque curare aut magni fa- "cere non poſſum, etiamſi vellem quam maxime. Sic ille Vir Dei; qua reſ- "ponſione, ſicut mihi plane ſatisfecit, ita mihi tante virtutis admirationem auxit "non abſtulit.

God and mens ſalvation this way, he aſcribes the whole glory to God and Chriſt.

He reckons that his buſineſs is to make men more knowing and more holy; and therefore is careful to bring them over to the true knowledge of God and Chriſt, and to the principles and practice of our holy religion, rather than to a party or diſputable opinion, to uphold and promote a private intereſt. He is therefore more concerned about the eſſentials, than the circumſtantials of truth, as being loth to have Chriſtians taken up ſo much about little matters, while the one thing neceſſary lies neglected.

Therefore he makes no more things neceſſary to ſalvation, than Chriſt has made, nor teacheth for doctrines of God the commandments of men. And as hence he charitably judgeth of, and bears with thoſe that differ from him in leſſer matters: ſo he leans not ſo much to his own underſtanding, as to be over-dogmatical and poſitive, in things not ſo plainly revealed, as to neceſſitate the aſſent of men this or the other way. But if he do diſſent from the generality of his brethren in any thing, he does it not out of faction or conceitedneſs, but from a real diſſatisfaction in point of reaſon or conſcience. About which notwithſtanding he raiſes no clamour, to the hazarding of the public peace, nor judgeth of himſelf more highly than he ought; but is careful to obſerve the apoſtle's advice, To walk with others ſo far as he has attained by the ſame common rule, and to mind the ſame things, that ſo what they and he differ in may be diſcovered to both in God's good time and way, Phil. iii. 16.

Being

Being conſcious to himſelf of a ſincere and honeſt deſign in all that he does, He lives above the cenſures and reproaches of others. For though he is careful to recommend himſelf to the conſciences of all men in well-doing; yet where men allow themſelves to cenſure him unjuſtly or uncharitably, from prejudice, paſſion or emulation, he values ſuch ſufferings little, ſeeing he has the teſtimony of a good conſcience to comfort him, and is aſſured of his maſter's approbation. And if ſome fooliſh and unreaſonable men deſpiſe his office as a miniſter, he is not a whit the more aſhamed of the doctrine of Chriſt, but magnifies his office, Rom. i. 16. and xi. 13.

He rejoiceth with Paul, that Chriſt is preached, and the deſign of Chriſtianity carried on by whatever inſtruments, Phil. i. 18. And therefore envies not the ſucceſs of any man in this good work, nor his acceptableneſs with the people, though it ſhould be much more than he himſelf is bleſſed with. And far leſs is he for ſilencing thoſe that God makes uſe of for the good of men, becauſe they differ from him in many things: For he remembers the ſage anſwer of the great Moſes to the over-zealous charge of Joſhua againſt Eldad and Medad, becauſe they propheſied in the camp without commiſſion from him: "Envieſt thou for my ſake? (ſays Moſes,) Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets, ſo he might but put his ſpirit upon them," Numb. xi. 26, &c. And he remembers alſo, that our bleſſed Saviour checked his apoſtles, for forbidding a man to caſt out devils in his name, only becauſe he followed not them, Mark ix. 38, &c. "For (ſays Chriſt) he

he that is not againſt us, is for us, and on our part," Luke xi. 45, &c.

His pulpit-geſture and ſpeech is not antick, mimical, affected; but he carries, looks, ſpeaks there, as becomes the majeſty of God, in whoſe name he ſpeaks, and the oracles of God, whoſe meſſage he brings. Therefore as his preſence is made up of gravity, ſerioufneſs, and ſweetneſs: So his language is neither ſcurrilous and mean, nor made up of luſcious rhetoric, and nauſeous bombaſte; but his words are plain and native, acceptable and choſen, powerful and attractive.

He ceaſeth not to be a miniſter when he is out of the pulpit; but carries himſelf in all his converſation, holily and religiouſly, walking thus humbly with his God, righteouſly toward men, mercifully to the poor, and ſoberly in the uſe of the creature, Micah vi. 8. For he is conſcientiouſly concerned to practiſe himſelf what he preacheth to others, exemplifying his doctrine thus in his life and converſation, that others may ſee there is a truth in Chriſtianity, and may be brought in word and deed themſelves alſo to glorify God.

He looks upon himſelf as obliged to act the more as a gentleman, that he is a miniſter. And therefore is not moroſe or ſtoical in his converſation, but, of a ſweet and winning carriage to all men (without being guilty of a ſordid fawning upon any man, or a baſe complying with all their humours). For he prefers the character of the bleſſed Jeſus, before that of his forerunner the Baptiſt: which favoured of the ſpirit of the Old-Teſtament, as our Lord's was a perfect pattern of the New. Therefore whereas John came neither eating

nor drinking, Chriſt acted quite otherwiſe: that is, whereas John came and ſpake to men, in a rigid, authoritative and reſerved manner, Chriſt came in a friendly, engaging and ſociable way, mixing attractive gentleneſs and ſweetneſs with awful miracles, powerful ſermons, a majeſtic preſence, and the greateſt purity, and ſtricteſt holineſs of life.

Therefore, though he is no reſpecter of perſons, in an ill ſenſe, nor thinks the meaneſt perſon of his church beneath his care and ſerious concern: Yet he is obſervant of the characters that men bear in the world, and the ſtations God has placed them in, in his providence; and renders honour to whom honour is due, and obedience to whom obedience belongs, Rom. xiii. 7.

Love to, and admiration of the oracles of God, grows up with him, as he grows in knowledge, grace and experience. And therefore, though he make a right uſe of other books and helps, in order to the cultivation of his mind, as to the truths of religion: Yet ſtill he believes nothing as ſuch, but what he finds contained in his Bible; which he therefore ſtudies as his only ſyſtem or body of divinity. For he calls none father of his faith but God, nor any man Rabbi or teacher of his religion but Chriſt, Matth. xxiii. 9, 10.

He is not given to contention, is not ſoon angry, or eaſily put out of due temper and frame, is no railer or ſtriker, nor any promoter of faction, ſedition or ſtrife; but he ever prefers the public good before his private emoluments, or intereſt, or honour; and with meekneſs of wiſdom inſtructeth and convinceth them that oppoſe themſelves, 2 Tim. ii. 25. making himſelf thus all

things

things to all men, as to their judgment and conſcience, not humour or biaſs, for their good and advantage, 1 Cor. ix. 19, 22.

He finds work enough in his cloſet and pulpit, and among his people, without intermeddling in other mens affairs, or travelling from place to place, or ſtreet to ſtreet, as a buſy-body, in things that concern him not. And therefore he goes not beyond his ſphere, by meddling with what relates to the polity and buſineſs of the civil magiſtrate.

His zeal for religion is regulated by knowledge and moderation in the exerciſe of it: And therefore he is not of ſo hot and furious a diſpoſition, as to wiſh fire to fall down from heaven, and deſtroy all that do not immediately receive Chriſt, and obey the goſpel, Luke ix. 54. Far leſs is he for perſecuting Chriſtians of different denominations from himſelf, or for ſtirring up the magiſtrate to do ſo. But he imitates the peaceable example of the bleſſed and holy Jeſus, and ſays of perſons of this perſecuting diſpoſition, that they know not what ſpirit they are of, Luke ix 55. For his worſt wiſh to his moſt inveterate enemies is, "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do," ver. 23, 34.

And yet, though no Roman Catholic, he is a man of a Catholic ſpirit, and has reſpect to the intereſt of religion as he has occaſion, beyond the limits of his own particular flock; as knowing he is a miniſter of the univerſal church, whatever be his ſpecial ties to a particular congregation.

Therefore the care of all the churches lies upon his ſpirit, with a deep and ſerious impreſſion, 2 Cor. xi. 28. Whence, as he ſympathizeth with the ſtate of the church of God every-where, ſo as to be willing to be offered up for the good of the brethren, if called to it: So he has a tender regard of every particular member of Chriſt's body, rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and mourning with them that mourn.

In ſhort, whatever his infirmities be, he is careful to walk with God, as one that has devoted himſelf wholly to his ſervice, both as a miniſter and Chriſtian. And therefore he acts from religious principles, for holy ends, according to the rule of God's word, and in a dependence upon him, as to the main of his life, whether in private or public: as conſidering that he is in the preſence of an all-ſeeing God, and muſt give an account to Chriſt at the great day, how he has diſcharged his meſſage, improved his talents, performed his office, and acted for the glory of God, and the ſalvation and good of the ſouls under his charge.

This is the character of a true and faithful miniſter of Chriſt, as to ſome of the main ſtrokes, towards the drawing of his picture. Which, though imperfect, as done by me, may yet ſerve to incite and animate all ſerious miniſters to a more diligent and faithful diſcharge of their great work.

But there is yet a fourth Uſe that I would have us miniſters make of what I ſaid before, viz. ſeeing the work is ſo great and difficult in itſelf, and we ſo inſufficient for it; that therefore we do ſolemnly dedicate ourſelves to God, and enter into covenant with him as ex-

explicitly as we can, in order to be assisted by him, as we are his servants in the work of the ministry of our Lord.

But seeing I apprehend this proposal will sound harsh in the ears of most persons, and that it may surprize almost every body, seeing I confess I never read or heard of it before; I find myself obliged to let the world know what my meaning and design is, in what I have hinted.

I hope, it is beyond dispute with all understanding and serious Christians, that in order to be saved, we are obliged to accept of Christ as our Saviour and Master, according to the gospel-offer and the terms of it. And to do so, is, I am sure, to covenant and engage with him as really, though in a spiritual sense and mental way, as he does, who binds himself apprentice or servant to a master.

Now it was ever reckoned an excellency in all contracts and agreements, that the parties contracting should be as express, explicit and formal in the articles they agree upon, and in the binding one-another to the performance of their several parts, as possibly or reasonably can be done.

Upon these plain suppositions some of our best practical divines have proceeded; when they exhorted Christians to a formal stipulation, this way, with God in Christ. * Some of whom have given us a form of con-

* See Mr. Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ, and Mr. Allen's Call to the Unconverted.

contract, for a directory or model, to regulate us in the discharge of our duty aright, in relation to so great and awful a transaction.

And indeed we will cease to censure them, and the many thousands that have received good by following their advice; if we consider the seasons that may be offered for this practice. For besides what I hinted just now, that the nature of the duty calls for this, and that we are to be exact in this affair if in any; we may remember what a copy God has cast us this way in his carriage to us. For what proclamation or manifesto can be more plain, positive, full and express, than that of the gospel is? And has he not in this told us our duty, as well as what he will do for us? Shall we then reckon it a virtue, to be irresolute and indistinct, in what we do or engage to do, to our God; when he is so distinct and positive not only in what he has promised to do, but in what he expects us to do on our part?

I shall not take notice of the covenant that was between God and Israel of old, nor of the several solemn renovations of it afterwards: because we are speaking of private and secret covenanting with God. Though we might perhaps argue even from hence, for what I now plead for. For whatever were the peculiar circumstances of that ancient people, which cannot perhaps in all things agree with other nations; yet sure every man is master of himself, and may therefore bind himself to what superior he pleaseth, and that with what formality he sees good. And is it then unlawful that I should dedicate myself to my God, by formal stipulation, who am under so many ties to do so?

May

May we not, if we pleaſe, vow to God then? May we not enter formally and expreſly into covenant with him? That from that time we may, upon ſpecial grounds, ſay, in obedience to our Lord, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth," Jer. iii. 4. For he will then ſay of us, That we are his people; and allow us to ſay to him, "Thou art our God," Hoſ. ii. 29. For God tells us, that in the New Teſtament times, "One ſhould ſay, I am the Lord's; and another call himſelf by the name of Jacob; and another ſubſcribe with his hand unto the Lord, and ſirname himſelf by the name of Iſrael," Iſa. xliv. 5.

But I muſt not run out too far this way. One thing only I would add, that it cannot but be uſeful and beneficial, thus to give up ourſelves firſt to God, and then to the church. For beſides that it ſtirs us up to duty, it is matter of encouragement to us, when we are under fears and perplexities; as giving us ground of hope, that he whom we have ſo ſolemnly avouched to be our Lord, whoſe we are, and whom we ſerve, will never altogether leave us, nor forſake us.

For which reaſon, as it is our duty to enter thus into covenant with God, ſo alſo to renew it at certain times. For, though every act of devotion be a virtual renovation of this: yet we ought to do it more ſolemnly at certain times, as at or before we partake of the Lord's ſupper, or when we are under ~~eminent~~ imminent dangers. Beſides that every one may have ſome annual day, that he may think proper to dedicate in whole or in part this way; ſuch as the day of one's birth or baptiſm, or the firſt day of the year, or any other remarkable day or time. For that there is good reaſon that we ſhould renew our

covenant with God, as well as enter into it, appears plainly enough to any that will consider, How soon lively impressions of God and Christ are apt to wear off the soul, and that this is a good method to maintain them. Besides that this will be an excellent mean also to strengthen faith and encrease joy, and to quicken us to the right discharge of all spiritual duties: as considering that we have thus bored our ears, if I may say so, to Christ's door, never more to leave off his service.

Now these things being considered, I come to that which I do more directly aim at in this use, viz. that ministers as such are obliged to engage themselves thus solemnly to the Lord. For they are under a double relation to God, viz. both as they are Christians, and as they act to the church, in the name of God and Christ, in a public capacity.

For the very nature of the ministerial work imports or supposes an agreement between us and him, whose ministers and servants we are. If our ministry be considered as a service; then surely it is no way alien from it, that we be express and distinct in engaging ourselves to the service of our blessed Master. And is not this very thing solemnly done by ministers when they are ordained? for I hope we do not then engage to be the servants of men but of God. Or if we consider our ministry as a trust; still the same thing is included in it: Whether we consider it as a trust of truth, to propagate and defend it; or as a trust of souls, to assist, edify and comfort them. For if it be a trust, it cannot be hurtful to us, to be express and explicit, in our engaging ourselves to it. For though God know our thoughts, and stand in need of no indications besides to know them:

yet

yet with reſpect to us, this way is neceſſary, for the better diſcharging of this ſacred office. For though he know our wants, and therefore need not that we pray with earneſtneſs for his gracious aſſiſtance, as if we could inform him of our wants, or influence him by our arguments; yet he who knows our frame and circumſtances, obligeth us to pray and wreſtle with him in prayer, in order to obtain our ſuits, as if the caſe were indeed thus; for it is the fervent prayer of a righteous man that is effectual and availeth much. Now what mean all theſe names that miniſters go under in Scripture, when they are called ſervants, ſtewards, overſeers, elders, miniſters, watchmen, paſtors, teachers, ambaſſadors, &c.? Ought not a man, that is ſo variouſly related to God, be as diſtinct to his great Maſter in engaging himſelf to the performance of this great work, as he ought to be explicit and plain to men, in his entering upon it outwardly to them?

And though Moſes and Aaron, Samuel, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, and the apoſtles, had all of them extraordinary calls to their ſeveral miniſtrations; yet the accounts we have of their ſeveral calls this way, do all of them ſuppoſe ſomething of this kind in the general, by way of ſtipulation, as that which the relation of maſter and ſervant doth neceſſarily involve; though the way of their call and miſſion cannot now be drawn into a precedent.

All theſe things therefore being conſidered, I have often wondered, that none of all our divines (at leaſt that I have heard of) has ever taken notice of any thing relating to this miniſterial covenant, even ſuch of them

as have been moſt earneſt to promote the deſign of the former.

And therefore I ſhould not have mentioned this neither, did I not hope that the ſtarting of it may be of ſome uſe to revive the power of godlineſs among miniſters, and conſequently among private Chriſtians alſo. For would not a ſolemn and ſerious dedication of ourſelves to God be of great ſervice this way?

It is not for me to ſay more upon this ſubject at this time. Every one muſt act as he is fully perſuaded in his own mind. And where an implicit aſſent and conſent to a thing is given, there I know the eſſence of a covenant is. I do not therefore plead for the abſolute neceſſity of a more formal, explicit and expreſs covenanting with God; but only for the conveniency and profitableneſs of it. For would not this keep our ſpirits under more awful and ſerious thoughts of God, and excite us to mind the miniſtry, otherwiſe than as a trade or preferment, as ſome, and I am afraid, too many do, to the ſcandal of Chriſtianity, and the danger, yea ruin frequently of their own and other mens ſouls?

What if then I venture to propoſe a form of ſuch a contract here, to the ſtudents of divinity, and thoſe that are probationers and candidates of the miniſtry: which every one may alter or change, as he finds to agree with his caſe and circumſtances moſt; or compoſe another in ſtead of this, if it pleaſe not ſome.

When therefore any ſuch perſon is fully convinced, in his own mind, of the lawfulneſs and expediency of acting thus; in dedicating himſelf ſolemnly to God, both

both as a Chriſtian and a miniſter: Let him ſet ſome time apart to be ſpent this way, in ſome cloſe retirement. And after preliminary conſiderations of the greatneſs of God, and the weight of the thing he is about; let him proſtrate himſelf before the divine Majeſty: Where after imploring his preſence and acceptance, let him ſeriouſly, judiciouſly, believingly and humbly, with firm reſolutions of obedience, dedicate himſelf to his great Maſter; in theſe or the like words.

"O Lord my God, I come at this time, with all hu-
"mility and in the moſt ſericus and ſolemn manner I
"am capable of, to dedicate, conſecrate, and devote
"myſelf to thee: beſeeching thee to pardon whatever
"weakneſs or imperfection I may be guilty of in this
"performance, and to accept the breathings of a poor
"ſoul, who longs to be more and more thine, to
"know thee, to converſe with thee, and to enjoy thee
"further.

"And, Firſt, as I am a Chriſtian, I offer up myſelf
"to thee wholly and for ever. And as I have formerly
"accepted of the call of thy goſpel, and conſented to
"the terms thereof, ſo I do now moſt ſolemnly declare,
"That I do ſo with all my heart and ſoul. I make
"choice of thee therefore to be my only God and por-
"tion. I yield myſelf wholly to Chriſt, as my only
"and compleat Redeemer and Saviour, and as my
"great and kind Maſter and Sovereign: I truſt to his
"merits only for ſalvation, both initiate, progreſſive,
"and conſummate. I accept of him in all his offices,
"as he is made of God to his people, wiſdom, righte-
"ouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption. I take the
"holy Spirit, and ſubmit unto him as my ſanctifier,

" comforter, perſuader and aſſiſter in prayer and all
" good works; and do humbly beg for his influences in
" all theſe reſpects. I have choſen thy word as my he-
" ritage for ever: The truths thereof, as the matter of
" my meditation; its promiſes as my ſecurity and en-
" couragement; and its commands as the rule of my
" life and practice, without any ſinful reſerve or partia-
" lity, being reſolved to yield an entire obedience even
" to ſuch precepts as ſeem moſt ſevere to fleſh and blood,
" and to ſuch as ſtrike moſt againſt thoſe ſins I am na-
" turally moſt inclinable or liable to, being concerned
" thus to deny myſelf, take up my croſs and follow my
" maſter, even though I be obliged to loſe all things
" here below in doing ſo.

" And next, as I am a miniſter, I deſire and reſolve,
" through thy grace, to be faithful and true to him that
" ſent me. I am reſolved therefore to ſearch after di-
" vine truth, and the right ſenſe and ſcope of Scripture,
" diligently and impartially, without reſpect to education
" or party. My deſign is to declare, as far as I am able,
" the whole counſel of God; yet principally to teach
" and preach thoſe things that tend moſt to edification.
" I ſhall endeavour faithfully to watch over the ſouls of
" thoſe committed to my truſt, by directing, exhorting,
" reproving, encouraging and comforting them as their
" caſes and circumſtances may require. I ſhall make it
" my ſtudy to behave towards perſons of all ſorts, with
" what prudence I am maſter of, and to walk holily
" and humbly in all things, by ſpending my time, and
" improving the talents and opportunities thou art pleaſ-
" ed to afford me, to the beſt advantage I can. In all
" which I ſhall ever deſign thy honour, the credit of my
" profeſſion, the benefit of the public, the good of ſouls,

" the

" the edification of thoſe that are without, and the pu-
" rity and peace of my own conſcience before thee,
" without any unwarrantable reſpect to my private ho-
" nour or intereſt in this world.

" But now, O Lord, as I take thee to be witneſs of
" my ſincere deſign and intention to act this way to
" thee and men, ſo I do declare, that it is not from any
" preſumption of my own ſtrength or ability, that I give
" thee this ſolemn declaration of acting as thy ſervant.
" For thou that knoweſt all things doſt teſtify, together
" with my conſcience, that my end in this is, to lay my-
" ſelf under the ſtrongeſt and moſt binding ties and ob-
" ligations I poſſibly can, in order rightly and faithfully
" to diſcharge the work and ſervice thou haſt intruſted
" me with, both as I am a Chriſtian and miniſter, in hope
" that thou will accept of me, and be aſſiſting unto me at
" all times and in every thing; that I may experience thy
" conſtant and uniform care over me, as my Father and
" benefactor, and my Lord and Maſter. For which end I
" do humbly and earneſtly implore thy hearing and ac-
" cepting of what I have further to lay before the throne
" of thy grace, at this time.

" Seeing therefore, O my God, I claim a relation
" to thee through Chriſt, as I am a Chriſtian: and
" ſeeing thou haſt this way raiſed my expectations as
" well as deſires, by thy great mercy and thy rich
" promiſes; I make bold (in obedience to thy command,
" and in compliance with thy will) humbly to demand
" that I may ever be the object of the one, and expe-
" rience the fulfilling of the other, as thou ſeeſt moſt fit
" for me. I do therefore venture to lay claim to thy
" pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace. I expect

" thy

" thy protection from enemies of all ſorts. For lo!
" I do avouch thee this day, as my God, to be to me
" inſtead of all relatives, my ſovereign, my judge, my
" phyſician, my ſhepherd, and my true and beſt friend.
" I cannot therefore queſtion, after this, but thy per-
" fections ſhall be forthcoming to me, according to
" the peculiar circumſtances I am or may be under:
" and that ſo I ſhall experience, that thy all-ſufficiency
" is the lot of my inheritance, and thy eternity the date
" thereof; that thy omnipreſence ſhall ſupply the want
" or defects of other company, thy unchangeableneſs
" be my fortreſs, thy omniſcience my overſeer, thy
" wiſdom my counſellor, thy omnipotence my guard,
" thy mercies my ſtore, thy goodneſs my conſolation,
" thy juſtice (ſatisfied in Chriſt) my rewarder, thy ho-
" lineſs a conſtant fountain of grace to me, and thy faith-
" fulneſs my ſecurity in all theſe. In all which reſpects
" I hope and deſire, that thou mayſt be pleaſed to ap-
" prove thyſelf to me, as my Father, in thy tender af-
" fection, compaſſion, inſtruction, protection and pro-
" viſion; that Chriſt may pleaſe to evidence himſelf to
" be my ſaviour, my maſter, and my advocate and in-
" terceſſor; and that the holy Spirit may alſo take care
" of me, as my counſellor, ſanctifier, ſtrengthener, and
" comforter; and, conſequently, that I may be bleſt
" with peace of conſcience, joy in believing, increaſe
" of grace, acceſs to my God in prayer, and perſever-
" ance in the ways of God. And if thus thou beſtow
" thyſelf on thy poor creature, may I not with thee
" expect all things beſides? I ſhall therefore expect,
" that thou wilt not deny me ſuch external mercies as
" I ſhall ſtand in need of, with reſpect to the comfort-
" able diſcharge of all duties. Let me therefore have
" neceſſary and convenient ſupplies of creature-comforts,

" to-

" together with the protection of thy angels, and the
" co-operation of all thy providences for my good.
" And when thou ſhalt call me to leave this body and
" remove from this earth, let me then be enabled to
" give an honourable teſtimony to thy way and work,
" and let an abundant entrance be granted me into the
" everlaſting kingdom of my dear Lord and Saviour
" Jeſus Chriſt."

" But ſince thou, O glorious and gracious JEHOVAH,
" haſt allured me to thy goſpel-work as an office-bearer
" in thy houſe, and honoured me by putting me into
" the miniſtry; I muſt on this account alſo humbly claim
" thy preſence and aſſiſtance. That as I came into this
" work in obedience to thy call, and reſolve to continue
" in it through thy grace: So I may be aſſiſted and en-
" couraged therein. I ſhall therefore henceforth con-
" ſtantly beg and humbly expect, that thou wilt com-
" mand thy bleſſing upon me in my meditations and
" ſtudies, that I may be ſafely and clearly guided by
" thy Spirit into all truth, and kept from errors of all
" ſorts. I beg ſtrength both of body and mind, for the
" work thou calleſt me to. And when it lies heavier
" upon me at one time than another, let thy grace be
" ſufficient for me, and thy ſtrength made perfect in my
" weakneſs. I beg that my natural parts may never
" fail me, and that my acquired parts may ſtill increaſe,
" by a further addition of all neceſſary learning. And
" let grace within be ever on the thriving and growing
" hand, that though my outward man decay, the inward
" man may be renewed day after day. And as I deſire
" to increaſe in all knowledge, ſo in all utterance alſo;
" that I may be enabled to pray ſpiritually and to edifi-
" cation, and to preach as the oracles of God freely

" and

" and boldly, and to ſpeak more privately alſo, to the " edification, conviction and comfort of thoſe I have to " do with. And particularly I humbly and earneſtly " deſire, that I may not labour in vain, nor ſpend my " ſpirits and ſtrength for nought, but that I may ſee " (if it be thy bleſſed will) many ſouls convinced, con- " verted, enlightned, eſtabliſhed and comforted by my " poor labours in the work of the miniſtry. For which " purpoſes give me tenderneſs and bowels of compaſſion " to poor periſhing ſouls: and make me conſcientious " and faithful in all the parts of my work. And in ſum, " let me ever find thee enabling me to carry and walk, " as becomes my character and truſt, that I may in no " reſpect be an occaſion of offence to any, but may in " all things adorn the goſpel of Chriſt. But if I meet " with unjuſt cenſures, reproaches or oppoſitions, in " the faithful diſcharge of my miniſtry, or be perſecuted " otherwiſe by men, or meet with trials and afflictions " in thy holy providence; then I beg thy more ſpecial " aſſiſtance and ſupport, that as my day and hour of " temptation is, ſtrength may be proportionably impart- " ed to me from thyſelf. In all which reſpects let me " ever find that thou art with me always even to the " end. Amen.

" And now, O Lord, here is the covenant that I " deſire to make with thee. Pardon what is amiſs in " the compoſition as it flows from me, or in the frame " of my mind in this ſolemn addreſs to my glorious " God; and let me be enabled to do what I have now " engaged myſelf to the performance of, and experience " that thou doſt indeed fulfil thy promiſes on thy part " alſo. Do for me, in all theſe things, I beſeech thee, " above what I can either aſk or think, for thy mercy's

" ſake,

" ſake, and thy Chriſt's ſake. Say therefore amen, O my
" God, and ſeal this covenant and bargain, that it may
" be binding and perpetual. I queſtion not but thou doſt
" ſo, and wilt do ſo further for thy glory and my good.
" And in this faith, with all readineſs and ſubmiſſion, I
" ſay, amen, and amen, and ſubſcribe myſelf thine, thine
" wholly, thine for ever; this preſent day, &c. in the
" year," &c.

Now I leave it to the impartial conſideration of all ſerious Chriſtians, and particularly miniſters, whether there be any thing in what I have ſaid here, that is inconſiſtent with the goſpel. For though this contract relates eſpecially to miniſters, yet every private Chriſtian may make uſe of it, paſſing over that part that relates to miniſters, as ſuch.

For my own part, I do humbly conceive that this might be of conſiderable uſe to all ſerious perſons, if duly conſidered and improved. For ſuppoſing a devout ſoul, after engaging himſelf thus to cleave unto the Lord with full purpoſe of heart, Acts xi. 23, 26. as Barnabas exhorted thoſe early diſciples at Antioch, who were firſt honoured with the name of Chriſtians, upon their following his advice: I ſay, ſuppoſing a Chriſtian act thus, and annually (or oftner) renew this; ſurely we cannot but think that this will be exceedingly uſeful to him, to incite and encourage him in the ways of God, in order to grow in grace, holineſs, and uſefulneſs.

And in order to this, may it not be adviſable, that ſuch a perſon keep a private Diary, that upon every annual renovation of this covenant, he may adjuſt and balance all occurrences for the year preceding; that ſo

from paſt experiences he may be directed in his duty for the time to come.

But as we ought to be abſtracted from all the world, in what paſſes between God and our own ſouls in ſecret; ſo in keeping a Diary we ought to write in characters, or in ſuch a manner, as none may know what is there. For many honeſt and ſincere, but weak perſons, have been guilty of a great many impertinencies this way: which have been an occaſion of ſtumbling to ſome, and matter of burleſque to profane wits.

And therefore great care muſt be taken in this alſo, that we fill not ſuch a record with little minute things, or the effects of fancy and a warm imagination; but with ſuch ſolid and conſiderable materials, as we are not only ſure of, but judge to be of uſe in our after-life, in order to the regulation of our thoughts or converſation. For God never required or expected any ſuch thing of any man, that he ſhould regiſter every occurrence of his life this way. For ſuch an attempt were to juſtle out more neceſſary and important duties: And therefore upon this and many other accounts, is both unwarrantable and impertinent.

But beſides this we muſt be very cautious, in drawing particular occurrences or experiences into rules, eſpecially as to what we are to expect from God, in anſwer to prayer or otherwiſe. For he is a free agent, as well as our ſovereign, and may act variouſly to us as he pleaſeth.

And ſeeing we write and keep ſuch records, for ourſelves and our own uſe and not for others, I am altogether

ther againſt printing any thing of this kind; ſeeing we have a ſufficient directory in the word of God, which our experiences can add nothing unto, no more than Popiſh traditions. And ſurely it would ſavour both of great pride and folly, if while I act according to my own ſenſe and experience of things, and not another man's, I ſhould ſee myſelf in ſuch a monſtrouſly magnifying glaſs as to imagine all mankind muſt quit their ſenſe and experience, to allow of mine as the only perfect model.

But if any experience of ours may be of uſe to promote a public good, ſo that we find we muſt neglect that, if we publiſh not ſomething of this kind: in that caſe, both modeſty, humility and prudence will oblige us (whatever way we take to publiſh our thoughts this way) not only to conceal our names in print, but to ſpeak in ſuch a manner in the third perſon, that though the author were diſcovered, the perſon to whom this relates might ſtill remain incognito, and continue wholly unknown.

After theſe hints, I leave the improvement of what I have ſaid to every man's own thoughts and prudence: For I confeſs myſelf to be altogether unable to direct as to particulars. And though I were, yet the laſt caution I have given, would ſtop my pen from running further on this head; I proceed therefore to ſomething elſe.

Therefore in the ſecond place, as the doctrine I have conſidered, has a voice to miniſters, ſo alſo to all thoſe who are aſſiſting to them as officers in the church.

And it is briefly this, That they would ſeriouſly conſider the greatneſs of their own work alſo. For though

they have not all or moſt of the work of the miniſtry upon them, yet they have ſome part of it: And it is no ſmall or eaſy thing to perform the leaſt duty of this kind aright. Sacred things ought to be performed in a very ſerious and holy manner, whether they relate to the ſouls or bodies of men, to the more eſſential or circumſtantial affairs of the Church: Therefore, ſays the apoſtle, "Let them that rule, do it with diligence; and let them who diſtribute the Churches ſtock and charity, do it with ſimplicity and chearfulneſs, Rom. xii. 8.

And ſeeing the miniſter's work is ſo very great and difficult, they ought to reckon it their duty to be aſſiſting to them all they can with their beſt advice, and ready and hearty concurrence in all things that make for the public good of the church and ſociety, and the private benefit of the particular members thereof, over which they are alſo, in their ſtations, appointed overſeers: For they are helpers, or, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, helps, both to the miniſter and the church, in as far as they are conſtituted by both to aſſiſt towards the good and peace of the community, 1 Cor. xii. 28.

In the third and laſt place, the doctrine I have inſiſted upon, has a voice alſo to all Chriſtians whatſoever, eſpecially ſuch as make up the congregation, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, as being members of it.

If ye ſay, What can this concern us who are private Chriſtians only, and have nothing to do with the miniſterial office or government of the church? I anſwer, That this doctrine concerns you alſo, and that in a threefold reſpect, in relation to your judgment, to your affection, and to your practice.

And,

And, Firſt, It has a voice to your judgment, in order to rectify a vulgar miſtake, that many are poſſeſſed of, viz. That it is the eaſieſt thing in the world, to be a miniſter. Many men think no work hard but manual ſervice and operations. They look upon thoſe to have a ſevere and difficult taſk, who are drudges all the day at hard labour. And ſo I grant they have: but let me tell you, that mental work is no leſs hard and difficult. For while the hard work of a labouring man keeps his body healthful and vigorous, it is commonly quite otherwiſe with hard ſtudents. For ſcholars ſpend the fineſt and beſt of their ſpirits, which, together with a ſedentary life, doth ſooner exhauſt their ſtrength and vigour, than the greateſt bodily labour can do. For while the ſpirits are conſtantly drawn up into the brain by inceſſant and cloſe thinking, after the manner of a perpetual limbeck, the reſt of the body muſt proportionably be exhauſted, and prove languid and weak. Whence it comes to paſs, that while they tug and ſweat at the pump of ſtudy and meditation, they have oft but few ſpirits left, duly to perform the inferior animal offices of digeſtion and chilification, and ſo ſtand in need of more and finer ſupplies to recruit or recover nature. Solomon, who was certainly the moſt competent judge of things of this kind in the world, gives us this determination of the matter; that as, upon the one hand, the ſleep of a labouring man is ſweet (Eccl. v. 12.), and, conſequently, his labour healthful and ſtrengthning unto him: So, upon the other hand, much ſtudy is a wearineſs of the fleſh (Eccleſ. xii. 12.), as tending exceedingly to exhauſt nature. And ſurely our own, and the experience of all men, doth ſufficiently confirm what Solomon ſays in both theſe reſpects: For it is a very rare thing to ſee one that has been a hard ſtudent all his days, to continue vi-

vigorous and healthful ſo long as other men. And therefore the apoſtle had good reaſon to adviſe Timothy to uſe a little wine, and ſuch-like refreſhing things, for his ſtomach's ſake, and his frequent infirmities of body, 1 Tim. v. 23. that in proportion to the conſumption of ſpirits by ſtudy, preaching, and other labours, there might be a care to recruit and ſupply nature, which could not ſubſiſt long without this prudential concern, for his being kept in a capacity to continue his uſefulneſs and ſerviceableneſs to the church of Chriſt. But I ſuppoſe I have ſaid enough in the preceding part of this diſcourſe, to convince you and all men, that the work of a miniſter is no play or paſtime, but a great, weighty, ſerious, and laborious taſk (ſeeing as the ſpider doth proportionably diminiſh its body, as it encreaſeth its web; ſo alſo doth a hard ſtudent in this caſe): the conſideration of which, will therefore oblige every one of us to cry out with the apoſtle, "Who is ſufficient for this?" And make us conclude with him alſo, That no man is ſufficient for it, without the ſpecial preſence, aſſiſtance, and conduct of God.

2dly, The doctrine I have been upon, has a voice to your affection alſo: That ſeeing the miniſterial work is ſo great and difficult, ye would pity us, ſympathize with us, and put a favourable conſtruction on our weakneſſes and imperfections. Alas, my friends, if this great apoſtle was not ſufficient for theſe things; who of us can or dare ſay, we are? Whenever therefore ye ſee a miniſter proud, conceited of his performances, and full of himſelf, diſdaining and contemning others, and magnifying his own parts, as looking upon his work to be the eaſieſt thing in the world; ye may certainly conclude, that he is either an empty and weak man,

who

who has no ſenſe of his work, or a wicked and godleſs perſon, who minds it not otherwiſe than as a trade. As for my own part, I have been apt to run to a contrary extreme, in ſinking frequently into a deſpondency this way; which yet I am far from approving myſelf in, ſeeing, I hope I may venture to ſay, that it was by a very peculiar and ſpecial call and concurrence of divine providence, that I entered into the miniſtry at firſt, and have ſince that time ſerved God in the goſpel of his Son, with ſincerity, though great weakneſs, in ſeveral places of his vineyard. And though I am bold to appeal to the moſt High, that I have never changed my ſtation or place of reſidence, but upon the concurrence of ſuch circumſtances, as appeared plainly to contain a new call of providence, and were as the removing of the pillar of cloud and of fire, which I was obliged to follow: Yet I muſt confeſs, that it has ever been with fear and concern, that I have obtained of myſelf the liberty to obey, in ſuch changes of my life. And now that your kindneſs, rather than your judgment, has called me to the work of the miniſtry among you, in this great city, where there are ſo many valuable perſons that labour in the word and doctrine; I muſt tell you, that it has not been eaſy with me, upon that and many other accounts, to comply with your call and invitation, even though ſo unanimous, as to have no diſſenting vote. But now that my way has been made plain to me, and that I have yielded to your deſire, to ſerve God among you (as long as he ſees fit to continue me with you), as your miniſter and paſtor, I muſt earneſtly beg that your ſympathy may be with me, and your charity for me, as conſidering the greatneſs of my work, and my inſufficiency for it: From a conſcientious apprehenſion of which, my ſhyneſs, in

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accepting your call, for ſome time paſt, has entirely proceeded. And now, as I undertake this work with fear and dread: So when ye obſerve my failings and weakneſſes in the diſcharge of it (as no doubt ye frequently will), then pray call to your remembrance; that ye ſee nothing but what I did plainly and publicly forewarn you of in this my entry-ſermon, as well as more privately before.

Pity us therefore, my friends, under our frailties, for we are not angels, but poor weak creatures, ſubject to like paſſions with other men, and perhaps liable to more infirmities than moſt of yourſelves. Be fuller, therefore, of charity than cenſure; of compaſſion than prejudice. For I beſeech you to conſider this one thing, whenever ye find yourſelves inclined to judge hardly, or reflect ſeverely upon us, viz. That we have all your work, and a great deal more beſides. We have ſouls to ſave, prejudices to overcome, luſts to conquer, as well as ye. But we have much to do, with reſpect to your ſalvation, as well as our own. We have all your difficulties to overcome, all your temptations to reſiſt, and all your duties to do, in as far as theſe are common to Chriſtians. But beſides all theſe, we have peculiar trials and a ſpecial ſervice, as we are miniſters, which ye are not called to, nor acquainted with. But to leave this,

3dly, The doctrine I have been upon, has a voice alſo to you, as to your practice, as well as ours. This may appear ſtrange to ſome, at firſt view: But upon a nearer approach ye will find that it concerns you more than ye are perhaps aware of. If ye aſk, How can this be? I tell you, that even ye are obliged to be aſ-

aſſiſting to us in our work, that we may be enabled and encouraged to the right performance of it.

I am not upon any thing here, that has the leaſt relation to our temporal intereſt. For though it be your duty to aſſiſt us even this way, as ye are able; yet I would have you know, that I ſeek not yours, but you. God himſelf, and all men that have hitherto known me, bear me witneſs, that I never coveted any man's ſilver, gold, or apparel; and ye ſhall know it, if ye do not already. God knows that I love not this world in this ſenſe. And if there be any who proſtitute the miniſtry for ſuch ſordid ends, I am bold to ſay of them, as I am a miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, that their money ſhall periſh with them. But to return; I ſay, ye may help us in our work, and that in three reſpects.

1. By your uſing freedom with us, as to the ſtate of your own ſouls. For, though I know no other foundation for Popiſh auricular confeſſion than worldly policy, yet ye will find it not a little advantageous to your ſouls, to conſult faithful miniſters in dark or dubious caſes, that ye may be perhaps ſometimes exceedingly perplexed with. And to conſult with us, upon ſuch occaſions, will be alſo very uſeful to us, in directing us in our diſcourſes, ſo as to preach home to your underſtandings and conſciences, for your good. For the people are, in ſome ſenſe, the miniſter's library, which direct him in the choice of his texts, ſubjects, amplifications, and applications or uſes. And ſeeing the work of a miniſter in his ſtudies and meditations, and in his public performances, is enough, were there no more, to take him entirely up, ye ought to go to him, or ſend for him, when the caſe is urgent, and requires it, who cannot otherwiſe know all your circum-

ſtances. And one thing further I cannot but mind you of; that, when any of you or your friends are ſick, ye ſend for the elder to direct and comfort you then, and to pray for you, while ye or they are in caſe to join with him in prayer. For I have obſerved ſome to neglect this, till their dying friends be brought ſo low, that they are incapable of underſtanding what is ſaid to them, and conſequently unable to join in thoſe petitions that are put up for them. Let me therefore tell you, that ye muſt not look upon prayer as a charm, in that hour, that can give a paſſport to heaven, to thoſe ſouls that are altogether unmeet for that ſtate. And therefore if ye make not the prayers of others your own, by a hearty concurrence with the petitions offered up for you, ye can expect no benefit by them. In ſuch a caſe the pious and devout ſupplications of miniſters or others, will return into their own boſoms, fraught with bleſſings; while the impenitent and unbelieving ſinner, who flees not to God in Chriſt for mercy, ſhall receive no good by all theſe.

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2. Ye may help us, by your prayers to God for us, and the ſucceſs of our ſtudies and labours. This great apoſtle of the Gentiles had ſuch a ſenſe of his weakneſs and inſufficiency for this great work, that he did not reckon himſelf to be above the prayers of the meaneſt ſerious Chriſtian. Nay he earneſtly begs this from the Theſſalonian Chriſtians, as a favour and kindneſs that he did exceedingly want: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free courſe, and be glorified even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from abſurd and wicked men, for all men have not faith," 2 Theſſ. iii. 1, 2. And how earneſtly and pathetically does he beg this favour from the believing Romans alſo? "Now I beſeech you brethren, for

for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye ſtrive together with me, in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are diſobedient in Judea, and that the ſervice which I have for Jeruſalem, may be accepted of the ſaints: That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreſhed," Rom. xv. 30, 31, 32. And ſurely if the apoſtle found, that he ſtood in need of the fervent and conſtant prayers of churches and particular Chriſtians, how much more do ſuch poor creatures as we are, need the ſupplications of all good Chriſtians? Therefore let me beſeech you, my dear friends, to pray for us, for a bleſſing upon our ſtudies and labours among you, and for aſſiſtance and ſucceſs in all our work; that we may be enabled ſo to behave ourſelves, and to have God ſo preſent with us, that we may not be left to bare external ordinances, or made to ſuck at empty breaſts; but that the ſpiritual glory of God may fill our aſſemblies, and be with us alſo apart in our cloſets and open converſation: ſo that we may both ſave our own ſouls, and the ſouls of them that hear us; and may rejoice together in the day of judgment, and for eternity.

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3. Help us in this one thing further, and we ſhall deſire no more of you, nay we ſhall reckon our work as eaſy as ye yourſelves can poſſibly think it is: and yet the thing we deſire concerns you more than us, and is no way unreaſonable or diſadvantageous, as ye yourſelves cannot but acknowledge. For it is only this; that ye would believe and obey the meſſage we bring from God to you. O! be but won over to Chriſt, and to his laws and inſtitutions, and we ſhall reckon our work not only eaſy and light, but the moſt pleaſant and delightful thing in the world. The obſtinacy, unbelief, impenitency, and diſobedience of many, yea moſt, that

hear the gospel, is a load above all the other burdens of a poor minister of Christ. Yield yourselves therefore to the Lord, and be ye reconciled to all his precepts, ways and dispensations; and let it be your great business to make your calling and election sure, by working out your salvation with fear and trembling; and then set yourselves to walk closely and humbly with your God, as the children of light and of the day. And, if ye do this, we shall complain no more, nay we shall rejoice in the hardest task we may be put to, and the severest sufferings we may meet with, in doing our duty, and assisting you in yours. O! therefore make haste to heaven, and walk in the way that leads thither; watching carefully over yourselves, considering what enemies, both within you and without you, ye have to wrestle with and overcome. Let this then be our work and employment continually, my friends, that so when all our sorrows and labours are over, and when our souls take wing from these bodies into the unseen regions; both ye and I may happily and joyfully meet together, before the throne of God and of the Lamb, to join in our songs of praise with the general assembly of glorious angels and saints, in our Father's house above.

In order to this, may the Lord assist us all, so to run our race, that we may thus finish our course with joy: that we may hear our master call us to himself, saying; "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. Come ye good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord. Ye shall now rest for ever from your labours, and your works shall follow you in their happy effects, and as ye have been faithful over a few things, lo! I make you rulers over many things." Amen.

A BRIEF

ACCOUNT

OF

RELIGION,

AS IT CENTERS IN

CHRIST.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF RELIGION, AS IT CENTERS IN CHRIST.

I. SUCH is the myſtery of godlineſs, and ſuch is the inſcrutable wiſdom of the Author and Inſtituter of our holy religion, in the harmonious concatenation of all the neceſſary and eſſential parts of it; that he who believeth one fundamental article thereof aright, believeth all; and he who diſbelieveth one, hath no true faith of any 1: All the articles of our religion being as ſo many links of a chain, inſeparably and indiſſolubly joined together 2. But yet among all the articles of our faith, there is one, which by the appointment of God, is to us the foundation of all others, and the ground-work upon which all are placed. And this is that bleſſed article of the Redeemer and Saviour of ſinners, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt 3: Who is the alone center, wherein all the lines of divine truth do meet, from the ut-

utmoſt circumference of revelation; and is therefore the ſum and ſubſtance both of the Scripture itſelf, and of our religion contained therein 4.

1 John 14. 1. & 17. 3. Matth. 28. 19.] 2 Rom. 8. 19, 20. Eph. 1. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, &c. 1 Pet. 1. 2. 2 Theſ. 13. 14.] 3 1 Cor. 3. 11. 1 John 5. 1. 12.] 4 Col. 1. 26, 27.

II. If therefore we conſider the holy Scripture, we ſhall find that Chriſt Jeſus is the ſum and ſcope of this divine book, from the beginning to the end 1. For it was he whom God promiſed immediately after the fall, as a ſeed to repair loſt mankind, and to make up that dreadful breach which ſin had made between God and us 2. He it was, whoſe promiſed coming was the expectation of the ſaints in all preceding ages of the church; on which their faith depended, and their hope did hang, and whereon their ſalvation was founded 3. It was he, who was the ſubſtance of the Old Teſtament diſpenſation: who was pointed at in their types, ſhadowed forth by their ceremonies and rites, and deſigned in all their ſacrifices and oblations 4. It is he, who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending of all things 5. In him are all the antient propheſies fulfilled 6; and by him the law of God was perfectly kept and obſerved 7; and the curſe thereof obliterated and removed 8. So that in him all the promiſes of God are yea and amen 9. By all which it is plain, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the ſcope and ſum of the oracles of God, both of the Old and the New Teſtament; though he was veiled under

under the antient diſpenſation, whereas he is unveiled now to us.

1 John 5. 39. Luke 24. 27. 2 Gen. 3. 15. Gal. 3. 16. 3 Acts 10. 43. John 8. 58. 4 1 Cor. 10. 1—6. Gal. iii. 24. Heb. vii. 17. & viii. 5. & ix. 1. &c. & x. 1. 5 Rev. i. 11. 6 Heb. i. 1, 2. 7 Mat. v. 17. 8 Gal. iii. 10. 13. James ii. 10. 9 2 Cor. i. 20.

III. And as Chriſt is the ſum of the Bible, ſo likewiſe of our religion revealed therein 1. For he is the ſcope of all 2; and both the author and finiſher of our faith 3. All that knowledge of God, which is propoſed to us in the ſacred records, is in and by Chriſt 4; whether we conſider God abſolutely in himſelf, or relatively with reſpect to his creatures. If abſolutely, God out of Chriſt is not to be known: for ſo conſidered, he is ἀκατάληπτος, inſcrutable, unſearchable, and paſt finding out 5. The knowledge therefore of God, which men attain to by natural light only, and the aſſiſtance of ratiocination, ſcarce deſerves the name of knowledge, ſeeing all true knowledge tends to the bettering of him that hath it; which this ſeldom if ever doth 6. For God out of Chriſt, is a conſuming fire to ſinners 7; and dwells in light inacceſſible, which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath ſeen nor can ſee 8. So that if we would have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, we muſt have it in the face of Jeſus Chriſt 9: He being the only glaſs wherein we can truly ſee God. For in him only it is, that all the fulneſs of the Godhead dwells bodily 10: And it is only by him that we have free acceſs to God, whereby we may enter with boldneſs into the holieſt place, by that new and living way, which he hath conſecrated for us

through the vail of his flesh 11. For he only is the way, the truth, and the life 12. So that without Christ, a man's knowledge and faith is but error and presumption, his way but straying, and his life but dying.

1 Col. i. 19. John xvii. 3. 1 Cor. ii. 2. Phil. iv. 23. 2 Rom. xi. 36. 3 Heb. xii. 2. 4 John xiv. 9. 5 Job xi. 7, 8. & xxxvii. 23. 6 Rom. i. 20, 21, &c. 7 Deut. iv. 24. 8 1 Tim. vi. 16. 9 2 Cor. iv. 6. 10 Col. ii. 9. 11 Heb. x. 19, 20. 12 John xiv. 6.

IV. If again we consider God relatively, with respect to creatures; we shall find, that all that knowledge of God so considered is in Christ also, whether we consider God in his decrees, or in the execution of them. If the decrees of God come under consideration, though we know very little of them, seeing they are that which is called God's secret will, which belongs not properly to us 1: Yet so much we know, that it is only in and through Christ that men are predestinated to life, in order to be conformed to his glorious image 2, according to that eternal compact and agreement that past between the Father and the Son 3. Upon which account he is said to have had his delights with the sons of men, before the world was made 4. And therefore he is brought in saying, "Behold, I come, as in the volume of thy book it is written of me, for I delight to do thy will, O my God 5."

1 Deut. xxix. 29. 2 Rom. viii. 29. Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. 1 Tim. i. 9. 3 John vi. 38, 39, 40. and x. 17, 18. Tit. ii. 14. 4 Prov. viii. 31. 5 Psal. xl. 7. Heb. x. 7.

Or

V. Or if the execution of the decrees of God be conſidered by us; we ſhall find, that all this is in Chriſt alſo, both with reſpect to God's works of creation and providence. For if we conſider creation; it is Chriſt, who was the LOGOS or eſſential word of God, by which he produced all things. For as he was in the beginning with God, and was himſelf God: So it was by him that all things were made, nothing being made without him 1. All created things therefore, that are either in heaven or in earth, viſible or inviſible, whether they be thrones, or principalities, or powers, or any thing elſe, were all made by him and for him 2. For as he is the image of the inviſible God, ſo he is alſo the firſt producer of every creature 3.

1 John i. 1, 2, 3. Eph. iii. 9. 2 Col. i. 16. 3 Col. i. 15.

VI. Or if we conſider the providence of God, this is in and through Chriſt alſo: for as he made all things, and is before all things; ſo by him alſo do all things conſiſt 1. He is the great and ſole diſpenſer of providence, and governor of the world. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men may honour the Son even as they honour the Father 2. It is he then, who is both the the King of nations, in a general ſenſe 3; and the King of ſaints, and of the church, in a more ſpecial relation 4: of whoſe kingdom, power and dominion, there will be no end 5; for he muſt reign, until he has put all his enemies under his feet 6, and until the myſtery of God within time be finiſhed 7. For then, and not till then, will he deliver up his mediatorial king-

kingdom on earth to his Father, that God may be all in all 8.

1 Col. 1. 17. 2 John 5. 22, 23. 27. 3 Jer. 10. 7. 4 Rev. 15. 3. 5 Isa. 9. 7. Luke 1. 32, 33. 6 1 Cor. 15. 25. 7 Rev. 10. 7. 8 1 Cor. 15. 24. 27.

VII. But that we may see more fully and clearly, that all our religion centers in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, with respect to us; let us consider himself more immediately, in his person, office and benefits. If in his person; he is the eternal Son of God 1, and equal with his Father 2. He is the almighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace 3: who being the second Person of the blessed Trinity 4, came in the fulness of time, and became flesh, taking upon him the human nature 5, from the great love he bare to us 6; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil 7; and thus being made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful, faithful, and every way fitly qualified Mediator for us 8.

1 1 John 4. 14. 2 John 5. 17, 18. 3 Isa. 8. 6. 4 Mat. 28. 19 1 John 5. 7. 5 Gal. 4. 4. John 1. 14. 6 Rom. 5. 8. 7 Heb. 2. 14. 8 Heb. 2. 17.

VIII. For all this did our kind and blessed Master do and endure, that he might be every way fitted and qualified for discharging and performing that great office and trust, which the Father had committed to him, and which for our benefit he had freely and chearfully undertaken 1. And thus he is our Saviour and Mediator, faithfully acting as Prophet, Priest and King to his people 2. He acts as a Prophet, in illuminating our dark-

darkned minds with the ſaving knowledge of himſelf, and revealing unto us the perfect and holy will of God 3. As a Prieſt, in ſatisfying divine juſtice for us, in expiating our ſins, in conciliating to us the divine favour, and in making interceſſion for us 4. And as a King, in governing his people, ſubduing their iniquities, preſerving them from dangers and the power of their enemies, and in ordering all things for their profit and advantage 5.

1 John 10. 17, 18. 2 Acts 2. 10. 3 Acts 3. 22. John 1. 18. 1 Cor. 1. 30. 4 Heb. 4. 14. & 7. 25. 27. & 10. 12. Pſalm 110. 1, 2, 3, &c. Mat. 22. 42, &c. 5 Pſalm 2. 6. Iſa. 33. 22. & 43. 2, 3. Acts 17. 31. Rom. 8, 28. 1 Cor. 3. 22.

IX. And from hence it is, that all the benefits of Chriſt do reſult 1: Chriſt being thus the foundation of all our mercies and bleſſings; and both the procurer and diſpenſer of them to his people 2. For it is hence, that we come to be renewed after the image of God 3; that we are regenerated and born again 4; that our ſins are pardoned and done away 5; that we are juſtified 6, reconciled 7, and accepted as righteous in the ſight of God 8; and that we receive the adoption of ſons 9, and the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father 10, being made heirs and joint-heirs with Chriſt 11; and that we are alſo ſanctified and made holy by the blood of ſprinkling 12, being thereby cleanſed and purified from the blot and ſtain of ſin 13, and delivered from the power and prevalency of it 14.

1 Rom. 8. 32. 2 Eph. 4. 8. 3 Eph. 4. 23, 24. 4 John 1. 13. & 3. 7. 5 Eph. 1. 7. 6 1 Cor. 1. 30. 7 Rom. 5. 10. 8 Heb. 10. 14. 9 John 1. 12.

10 Rom.

10 Rom. 8. 15. 11 Rom. 8. 17. 12 Heb. 12. 24. 1 Pet. 1. 2. 13 Titus 2. 14. 14 1 John 3. 6. & 5. 18.

X. And it is from hence, that the holy Spirit is ſent as Chriſt's vicegerent to his church: being given to us, to be our comforter 1, our advocate 2, and our inſtructer and perſuader 3, by whom we are directed and led into all truth 4, guided and aſſiſted in all our ways 5, and particularly in our prayers 6. And hence it is, therefore, that the fruits of the Spirit do all reſult and proceed 7; ſuch as peace of conſcience 8, joy in believing 9, increaſe of grace 10, true Chriſtian liberty 11, and final perſeverance 12.

1 2 Cor. 13. 14. John 16. 7. 2 1 John 2. 1. 20. John 16. 8. & 15. 25, 26, 27. 3 John 14. 26. 4 Rom. 8. 14. 5 Gal. 5. 25. 6 Rom. 8. 26. 27. 7 Gal. 5. 22, 23, 24. 8 John 14. 27. 9 1 Pet. 1. 8. Rom. 15. 13. 10 Col. 2. 19. 11 Gal. 5. 1. 23. 2 Cor. 3. 17. 12 Rom. 11. 29. 2 Tim. 2. 19. Heb. 13. 25. 1 Pet. 1. 5.

XI. Thus Chriſt is all in all to his people 1. He is the captain of their ſalvation 2, and the ſaviour of his body the church 3: for he is the head of this ſociety 4, and the chief corner-ſtone of this building 5; ſeeing of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named 6. It is by him, that the veil of ſervil ceremonies was rent 7, and that hand-writing of ordinances that was againſt us was cancelled, nulled and vacated 8: So that the wall of partition being broken down 9, we have now an acceſs into the holy of holies 10. For he hath aſcended on high, and led captivity captive, and given gifts for men, for the perfecting of the ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry, and for the edifying of the body of Chriſt; till we all come in the unity of the faith,

and

and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt 11.— For which ends he qualifies ſome to diſpenſe his word and ordinances, and makes them able miniſters of the New Teſtament, not of the letter but of the ſpirit 12. And it is he likewiſe, who hath left his word, and the diſpenſation thereof in his church, until he come again, with a promiſe of his preſence with us, even unto the end of the world 13: bequeathing therewith the two ſacraments of the New Teſtament, Baptiſm 14, and the Lord's Supper 15, as the ſeals of the new covenant, and as pledges of his love to his people 16.

1 Col. 3: 11. 2 Heb. 2. 10. 3 Eph. 5. 23. 4 Col. 1. 18. & 2. 19. 5 Eph. 2. 20. 6 Eph. 3. 15. 7 Heb. 8. 7, 8. 8 Col. 2. 14. 9 Eph. 2. 14. 10 Heb. 10. 19, 20. 11 Eph. 4. 8. 12, 13. 12 2 Cor. 3. 6. 13 Mat. 28. 19, 20. 14 Rom. 6. 4. Col. 2. 12. 15 1 Cor. 11. 24, 25, 26. 16 Gen. 17. 10. Rom. 4. 11, 23.— - - -

Father, prepared for them from the beginning 9, where they ſhall ſee the face of God 10; and being ſeated in the bleſſed manſions above 11, ſhall there enjoy and ſatiate themſelves with the full fruition of the love of God their Father, with the conſtant participation of the grace of the Son their Redeemer, and with uninterrupted communion and peace of the holy Spirit their PARACLET 12. And ſo they ſhall become ἰσαγγελοι, equal with the angels 13, and be ever with the Lord 14.

1 Rom. 6. 23. 2 Heb. 6. 20. 3 John 14. 2, 3. 4 Acts 17. 31. 5 Rom. 2. 6. 6 Iſa. 66. 6. 7 Heb. 11. 26. 8 1 Cor. 6. 2. 8. 9 Mat. 25. 34. 10 1 Cor. 13. 12. 11 John 14. 2. 12 2 Cor. 13. 14. 13 Luke 20. 36. 14 1 Theſſ. 4. 17.

Now I hope I have made good what I undertook to demonſtrate, that all the great truths of our religion do terminate in Chriſt. And perhaps ye may expect further, that I ſhould inſiſt as long upon the duties of Chriſtianity, as centering in him alſo. But when ye allow yourſelves to think, that Chriſtian practice flows from the right knowledge and true belief of the principles I have been conſidering, by a natural and neceſſary conſequence; whence our Lord aſſures us, that it is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he has ſent 1: I ſay, when ye conſider this, ye will find that godlineſs being the concluſion that follows the foregoing premiſes; there is no need to inſiſt upon this, after what I have ſaid to demonſtrate theſe. And as the apoſtle ſays, Chriſt is the head of all true Chriſtians, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working of the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the body, unto the edifying of itſelf

itſelf in love 2. Therefore we muſt conclude with the ſame inſpired writer, that Chriſtians being ſaid to live, is an expreſſion ſynonimous to that other (as the more proper and emphatical of the two), that Chriſt lives in us: ſeeing the life we live now in the fleſh is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himſelf for us 3. For, for us to live, is Chriſt; and to die, is gain 4. So that the whole of practical religion, as well as theoretical, doth plainly appear to center in Chriſt. For, as the apoſtle excellently argues, If we are riſen with Chriſt, we ought to ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God; and ſet our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth. For, if we are true Chriſtians, we are dead to ſin, and only alive to God, our life being hid with Chriſt in God; and therefore ſeeing Chriſt is indeed our life, and ſhall appear again, we are certain that we alſo ſhall appear with him in glory 5. Whatever therefore we do, in word or in deed, we are to do all in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, giving thanks to God and the Father by him 6. For there is a cloſe and indiſſoluble union between Chriſt and his people, by which they are ſo united to him, as to become as it were one ſpirit with him 7. Whence it comes to paſs that we are ſaid to be members of his body, of his fleſh and of his bone 8: being ſecured thus as to life; for becauſe he lives we ſhall live alſo 9. For all is ours, becauſe we are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's 18. This lays us under ſtrong obligations to duty and holineſs; ſeeing we are married to Chriſt, that we may bring forth fruit unto God 11. And adherence to and dependence upon Chriſt, is the only way to become fruitful: for as the branch cannot bring forth fruit, unleſs it abide in the vine, no more can we except we abide in

him 12. It is from hence that they that perſecute the true ſervants of Chriſt, are looked upon as if they had perſecuted himſelf 13; and that neglect of duty to poor ſaints is puniſhed as a neglect of ſervice to Chriſt 14; and that, upon the other hand, ſerviceableneſs to them is rewarded, as if it had been done to him immediately 15. And from hence alſo it is, that we are led by the Spirit of Chriſt, in all our ways 16; and that both the Spirit and the bride join in one wiſh and deſire, that Jeſus Chriſt would haſten his coming again 17.

1 John 17. 3. 2 Eph. 4. 15, 16. 3 Gal. 2. 20. 4 Phil. 1. 21. 5 Col. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4. 6 Col. 3. 17. 7 1 Cor. 6. 17. 8 Eph. 5. 30. 9 John 14. 19. 10 1 Cor. 3. 22. 11 Rom. 7. 4. 12 John 15. 4. 13 Acts 9. 4, 5. 14 Matth. 25. 41, &c. 15 Mat. 25. 34. 16 Rom. 8. 14. Gal. 5. 18. 17 Rev. 22. 17. 20.

And thus I have given you a brief account of my creed, as I find it in Scripture, and as it centers in Chriſt. By which it may eaſily appear how fooliſh and chimerical ſome men are, who confine the knowledge of Chriſt to his prieſtly office, and to one branch of that, his ſatisfaction; yea to that only, under one conſideration of it, viz. as it relates to our juſtification, which they call imputed righteouſneſs, in a ſenſe that I am afraid many of themſelves underſtand not. As for me, I am indeed reſolved, with the apoſtle, to preach nothing but Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified 1. But then it muſt be in that latitude of expreſſion, that I have inſiſted upon above. For he is neither a legal nor goſpel preacher who is not conſcientiouſly careful ſo to behave himſelf, that he may be able to ſay, with the ſame apoſtle,

apoſtle, that he is pure from the blood of all men, ſeeing he hath not ſhunned to declare the whole counſel of God 2. So that he that preacheth any truth that Chriſt has revealed, preacheth Chriſt, as much as he that preacheth concerning his own perſon and office immediately.

1 Cor. 2. 2. 2 Acts 20. 26, 27.

But I ſhall not trouble you with more relating to this ſubject now. Only one thing further I would ſay here, with reſpect to myſelf; that ſeeing I would begin my miniſterial work, as I do deſign (through the grace of God) to carry it on and end it, I muſt deal ingenuouſly with you and all men, in telling you; that though I pay all due deference to the confeſſions of faith, made by the Reformed churches, and more particularly that excellent one compoſed by the Aſſembly at Weſtminſter: yet I cannot otherwiſe ſubſcribe to any human compoſition, as the foundation of my faith, but in as far as itſelf is founded on the holy word of God; which I muſt own to be my only Creed, Confeſſion of Faith and Syſtem of Divinity, in the ſtricteſt and moſt proper ſenſe. For it is in obedience to Chriſt, that I find myſelf obliged, to call no man Father of my religion but God, nor any man the infallible teacher of it but himſelf 1. And ſeeing the apoſtle commands all Chriſtians to examine the truths that even he and other inſpired men delivered, ſaying, "Try all things, and then hold faſt that which ye find to be good 2;" (for which practice the Bereans are ſo much commended by Luke 3): I therefore think that a miniſter, on a double account, ought to take this liberty, and be continually taken up in meditating upon the great things of divine revelation,

for the right handling of which he is particularly to be reſponſible to God 4. But this I readily confeſs, that we ought to ſtudy and preach and live the truth ſo in love 5, to them that differ from us, as not needleſly to diſturb the peace of the church of God; ſeeing the true ſafety of it ought to be dearer to miniſters than any thing in this world. I have therefore laid this down as the great maxim of my future ſervice in the church, that "Salus Eccleſie ſuprema ejus Lex eſt." According to which rule, and in the way I have juſt now mentioned, I deſign, through the divine aſſiſtance, to read, meditate, ſpeak and act; which may God in mercy grant, for the ſake of his dear Son and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

1 Mat. 23. 9, 10. 2 1 Theſſ. 5. 21. 3 Acts 17. 11. 4 1 Tim. 4. 13, 14, 15, 16. 5 Eph. 4. 15.

FINIS.

BRITISH 4 OC 70 MUSEUM

A

VIEW

OF THE

METHOD AND PRINCIPAL THINGS,

TREATED OF IN THIS BOOK.

VIEW OF THE FIRST DISCOURSE. 9–139

THE Author's Reaſon for printing the following Diſcourſes, and why he addreſſes this Diſcourſe to all his Friends, &c. 9

Which yet he appropriates to the Society he is now related to. 10

To whom he, 1. gives an account of the importance of the truths he has hitherto diſcourſed of to them. 11

2. Of his deſign to promote our common Chriſtianity; and of the concern he is under, upon the account of the differences and contentions of Proteſtants. 12

3. And of the reaſon of his diſſent from the Church of England.

And why he toucheth now upon this ſubject. With an account of our danger from inteſtine quarrels at this time. 14–20

Our entring upon a New Year and Age, gives occaſion to conſider Futurity here. 21

Therefore the Author proceeds to conſider the grand Apocalyptical-Queſtion concerning the Riſe of the Papal Antichriſt, in order to a deſigned improvement of it, both theoretical and practical. 23

And 1. he gives the Reader a new Reſolution of the Queſtion, concerning the Riſe, and conſequently concerning the Fall of Rome Papal.

Some Poſtulata premiſed, 22

And two Preliminary Conſiderations likewiſe. The 1ſt, That the Three Apocalyptical Numbers of 1260 Days, 42 Months, and Time; 22–26 Times

Times and a Half, are ſynchronical, and muſt be interpreted prophetically.

The 2d, That we muſt reduce the Prophetical Years to Julian or ordinary ones.

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II. An Improvement of the precedent Reſolution of the Queſtion concerning Antichriſt's Riſe and Fall.

And 1ſt. A theoretical improvement of it, with reſpect to the unriddling the Apocalyptical times and periods.

A general Account of the connexion of the three Septenaries of Seals, Trumpets and Vials.

The (1.) Septenary of Seals conſidered particularly.

The (2.) Septenary of Trumpets conſidered particularly.

The Three Wo-Trumpets.

A particular Account of the general Slaughter, unburied ſtate; and riſing again of the Witneſſes.

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The (3) Septenary of Vials.

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The 4th Vial, under which period we now are.

Conjectures concerning the 5th Vial.

Conjectures concerning the 6th and 7th Vials. And particularly concerning the laſt deciſive Battle and Place of Armageddon.

Some things hinted by way of Concluſion to the preceding Diſquiſition, and Theoretical improvement of it.

The 2d. improvement of the Reſolution of the former Queſtion, by way of Practical Obſervations.

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(2.) Obſervation; That it gives us a noble repreſentation of Providence and Chriſt's Government of the world.

(3.) Obſervation; That we may from hence ſee what of this Prophecy is fulfilled, and what not.

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